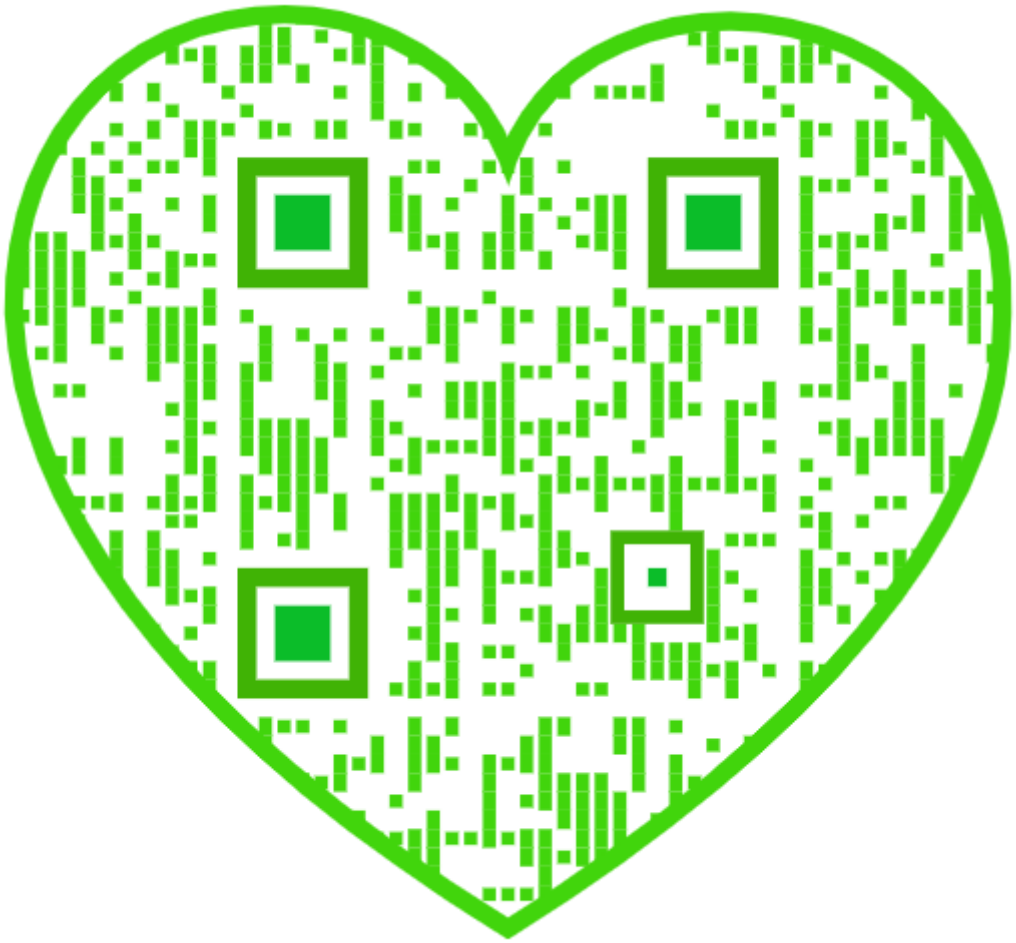
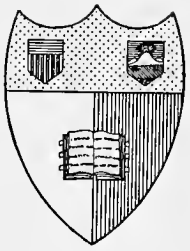
THE HORSE
AND THE WAR

CAPT. SIDNEY GALTREY





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THE HORSE AND THE WAR

On the Road to Victory.

The Horse and The War

By

CAPTAIN SIDNEY GALTREY

ILLUSTRATED FROM DRAWINGS BY

CAPTAIN LIONEL EDWARDS

AND FROM PHOTOGRAPHS

WITH A NOTE BY

Field-Marshal Sir DOUGLAS HAIG,

K.T., G.C.B., G.C.V.O.

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To

THE QUARTERMASTER-GENERAL OF THE FORCES

(Lieut.-General Sir John Cowans, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., M.V.O.)

OF WHOSE IMMENSE DEPARTMENT

OF OUR ARMY ORGANIZATION

THE REMOUNT AND VETERINARY SERVICES

ARE BRANCHES.

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From the Commander-in-Chief of the British Forces in France

The power of an army as a striking weapon depends on its mobility. Mobility is largely dependent on the suitability and fitness of animals for army work.

I hope that this account of our army horses and mules will bring home to the peoples of the British Empire and the United States the wisdom of breeding animals for the two military virtues of hardiness and activity, and I would add that the best animals for army purposes are also the most valuable for agriculture, commerce and sport.

G.H.Q.
France

D. Haig. F.M.

19 Sept: 1918

WAR-HORSES

By G. M. JEUDWINE

WE combed you out from happy silences
On thymey downs;
From stream-veined meadowlands alight with crowns
Of buttercups, where, for you, shapely trees
Made spacious canopies.

Now (day and night) unsheltered, in the mud
You droop and ache;
While ruthless hands, for human purpose' sake,
Fashion the complex tools which spill your blood
And ours in rising flood.

No deputation (yet) your wage controls.
Ungauged, unpaid
Your overtime. The war blast leaves no blade
Of green for you—poor ghosts of happy foals!—
Munching your minished doles
In ravages by human frenzy made.

CHAPTER I

Introductory

It was a pleasure to me to find from the admirable condition of the horses and mules of the various units I inspected that the new Armies fully uphold our national reputation as good horse-masters.—H.M. THE KING in his letter to Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig, dated France, August 13, 1918.

THIS volume is not the outcome of a solemn and virtuous resolve to write a book. It was not started with any idea that it would one day be a volume. It had modest beginnings even though it was conceived of a great subject such as no other writer in the fascinating history and lives of horses has had to comtemplate. It was just the writer's great good fortune, since war had to be. Those modest beginnings took the form of a contributed article, then another, and so on, until the sequence seemed to insist on being shaped into a coherent whole, which now emerges as a book on the hundreds of thousands of horses and mules that have been gallantly aiding the Empire's Cause. As I glance through the pages now I experience a sense of satisfaction that its original character remains. It was intended to be, and, indeed, could be no other than, a fleeting narrative of the vast and wonderful part played by our war-horses without which our Armies of millions would have been immobile and impotent. The self-appointed task was not without its difficulties and could have been approached in no other spirit than that of diffidence. The former were made less difficult by reason of the writer's own war service, which brought him to terms of easy intimacy with the subject; the latter simply had to be overcome with a consciousness that there might perhaps be too much diffidence in continuing to ignore this important aspect of our making of war.

For it is certain that the people of this country, of our Empire, and of the countries of our Allies know little or nothing of what this book professes to tell—of the horse and mule that help to move the gun, the transport wagon loaded with food, ammunition or stores, and in hundreds of ways keep Armies moving and make them formidable in offence and sure in defence. Surely the volume needs no better justification than this ignorance of the people. They could not well be otherwise, for I have failed to notice that our war-horses have had their agents of propaganda. The people only learn when failures are exposed and things are revealed. Our war-horses and mules have been bought, literally, by the million, and the taxpayer has contributed, and will contribute, to the many millions they have cost the State. Informa-

tion and publicity bureaus have caused even the Silent Navy to break its silence so that the people should know of its existence and history-making doings. Land and Air Forces have wisely been exploited by experts and laymen appointed for the purpose, and one cannot doubt that every one is better for the little knowledge thereby imparted. But the silent, plodding, uncomplaining horse or mule, each bearing the brand of national ownership, have never yet failed, and so they have never been heard of outside the Armies. May I hope this volume will bring them some little credit, some little gratitude for the debt, ever mounting higher and higher, we may never pay, simply because we may never realize how great it is.

I wonder if people understand that in order to keep pace with the requirements of our Armies we have had to buy horses and mules running well into seven figures. I wonder! Can you, for instance, imagine that whereas the Army possessed about 25,000 horses on August 4, 1914, we must now own at least a million? And in the interval of four years that million and many more—for, of course, we must allow for the heavy wastage from death and disease which has gone on in all the theatres of war from day to day—have had to be bought in all parts of the world and brought by our ships to Europe and the East. We have bought colossal numbers in North America, and others in South America, Australia and New Zealand, India, Spain, Portugal, South Africa, while camels, oxen and donkeys have been purchased for use in those theatres to which they were peculiarly suited. We may assume that the four or five hundred thousand bought up to date in the United Kingdom and the seven or eight hundred thousand bought and shipped from North America have been employed in this country and France in the same way as horses from Australasia would naturally be most conveniently used in Egypt, India and Mesopotamia.

You may ask if it is not a fact that motor haulage has largely displaced horses. Obviously after the figures I have given above it has not done so. To a limited extent it has unquestionably done so or there would be no reason for the existence of the bewildering growth of the Army Service Corps Motor Transport Companies, the immense "parks" of motor lorries in France and those other countries where the Allies are fighting, and, again, the tractors which are now part of all heavy siege artillery units. But what of the horses? Again let me emphasize the significance of the figures which, by the way, are necessarily vague, for reasons that must be well understood, without being too vague to convey no real meaning. I, at any rate, have often heard the remark: "But surely horses have ceased to be in modern warfare. One never, or very rarely, hears of cavalry. And isn't all the rest done by motors?" The belief is typical of the folk left behind. Hence there may be at least one virtue in the appearance of this volume, if it should succeed in shattering the absurd notion by which our brave war-horse is denied the credit that he is so fairly entitled to.

What is the artillery that preponderates in modern warfare? The field gun, of course, which is the weapon of the Royal Field Artillery and Royal Horse Artillery. Each must have its own team of conditioned horses, and so when you count up the guns in a battery, the batteries in a brigade, the

brigades in a division, the divisions in a Corps, and the Corps in our Armies on all the Fronts you arrive at a first calculation of the vital necessity of horses and mule in many tens of thousands, the wastage among which has to be watched with the greatest care in order that the establishments prescribed may be rigidly maintained. For easy mobility and flexibility in rapid movement are vital and essential in the making of successful warfare.

Then with the Artillery of every Division there must be a Divisional Ammunition Column, which means several hundred more animals, and again there is the Divisional Train Transport, chiefly horsed by weighty draught horses, while you must also bear in mind that every battalion of infantry has its own transport of at least half a hundred animals. Think also of the tremendous variety of other Units (especially those connected with Machine Guns and the Royal Engineers), which go to make an Army in being, each having horses or mules, or both, allotted to it. One has in mind Labour and Road Construction Companies, Railway Companies, Forestry Companies, units on Lines of Communication and the Medical Service.

What of the cavalry? There is an idea that it has ceased to exist since those early days when it did invaluable work in the retreat from Mons. Undoubtedly it seemed to pass into the limbo of things forgotten and out-of-date during the years of trench warfare, and no doubt both first and second line cavalry were put to more active uses than merely watching and waiting for the word to dash into the break in the barrier that never really came. I am writing, of course, of the era of trench warfare.

Was it not Mr. H. G. Wells, that genius of imagination, who wrote during the era referred to that the day of cavalry had gone for ever? It would be paying his genius and reputation a poor compliment to say that many people, both in and out of khaki, were not influenced by his pronouncement. Yet Jerusalem would never have been entered but for General Allenby's Cavalry; the crusade into the heart of Palestine was distinguished by the fine exploits of Yeomen of Warwickshire, Worcestershire, Buckinghamshire, and Berkshire; but for Indian cavalry Allenby's brilliant coup by which two Turkish armies were smashed would not have been possible; while the success and gallantry of the Dorsetshire Yeomanry at Matruh in the Senussi fill a sparkling page in near Eastern military operations. The advance to Baghdad and beyond along the shores of the Tigris was not made possible by guns and infantry alone. So, too, in France, when comparatively open warfare displaced the stalemate of trench warfare, we had cavalry coming into its own again. With an enemy in retreat cavalry must be present to direct, aid, and hurry the victorious sweep onwards. In my opinion the day must come in the closing stages of the war when cavalry will play its own great part. It will operate at the end as it did at the beginning but with this difference, that cavalry when used in an advance in conjunction with modern methods and engines of war must be more vitally important and essential than when used in defence.

If, therefore, I have made it clear that horses and mules are necessarily taking a big share in the burden of this gigantic war it will surely be appropriate that I should sketch briefly the methods adopted by our Army Authorities in dealing with the arriving crowds from across the Atlantic preparatory to their

going fit and well on active service to France and elsewhere. In this connection it will interest the reader to draw some comparison between requirements in the South African war and the vast demands on the world's horse population since August, 1914. For instance, I find the average strength in horses and mules in South Africa was approximately 150,000. I shall not be far off the mark if I say that the strength in 1916 of animals engaged with the British Armies is close on a million. There is a startling difference between the 70,000 horses which were bought in the United Kingdom during the South African war, that is, from October, 1899, to June, 1902, and the 450,000 which the United Kingdom had furnished for the Army between August, 1914, and the middle of 1918.

I am permitted to say that actually 165,000 horses were impressed in the United Kingdom in the first twelve days of the war. That was a great achievement for which the Remount Department of the War Office must be given ample credit. Its organization proved effective when thus highly tried, and though I daresay numbers of horses were bought which were not really suited to military uses, the fact stands out in history that the despatch to France of the original Expeditionary Force and the reinforcements which were immediately drafted over were never once delayed for want of horses. And in spite of casualties, sickness, and ever-swelling demands commensurate with the astonishing growth of our Army, immensely augmented as it was by the arrival of Imperial Forces from overseas, the splendid war-horses and mules have always been forthcoming. This surely points more eloquently than any words can do to the foresight, "bigness" of outlook, and judgment of the Quartermaster-General of the Forces and his Director of Remounts.

The reader must take a big view if the real meaning of the horsing of our Forces at home and abroad and all the organization and cost to the nation involved is to be appreciated. You have to think not in tens of thousands but hundreds of thousands, contemplating in passing the cost of each individual horse and mule and the immense shipping tonnage which was necessary for the transport from America to the United Kingdom or the Mediterranean of, shall we say, seven or eight hundred thousand animals. An odd hundred thousand or so seems to matter so little! Think also of the tens of thousands sent from Australia and China to India for our doings east of Suez. Remember I am writing in the Autumn of 1918, when the machinery of supply is still running so that the gaps created by the dreadful wastage of devastating war shall be filled and new units and ventures properly equipped with animals. Thank goodness the marvellous reservoir over the seas shows no appreciable signs of running dry, and therefore I am at any rate spared the ordeal of having to discuss an alarming eventuality of the kind. It may, of course, be otherwise after the Americans have helped themselves liberally in their own land. Naturally their animals must be in proportion to the vastness of their great Expeditionary Force to Europe.

I shall not be far wrong if I suggest that of the total brought to this country, the horses were in the proportion, roughly, of three to one mule. On the other hand they were chiefly mules that were sent direct to Salonika and Egypt, both theatres of operations being better suited to the hybrid than

to the horse. Apart from them we must bear in mind the many thousands which were brought over by the early Canadian Contingents, the thousands that came with the Australians and New Zealanders to Egypt, and the thousands again that accompanied the Indian Divisions which landed in France late in 1914 and early in 1915. If I told you of the hundreds of thousands that have crossed the English Channel to France you would be astonished, and yet it follows that the shiploads from the United States and Canada were destined in due course for France. Has it not been the case that for four years past there has been an almost daily stream flowing from England to France—all finished and fit horses and mules? South Africa sent many thousands of horses, mules, donkeys and oxen to East Africa for the prosecution of that campaign, and India, drawing on Australasia, China and the Argentine, has equipped our Forces in Mesopotamia.

In England the system instituted at the outset and perfected with time and experience has been to take in the new arrivals from overseas at three large receiving depôts. Each was conveniently situated close to an important point of arrival. Remember that these new-comers were unfit, untrained, and "raw" in every sense. The fact is emphasized in a later chapter, and it is merely mentioned now in order to point out that it was the function of these large receiving depôts to begin the work of cleaning up, trimming out, and training of the animals. They would then be distributed among smaller Depôts, and especially among Reserve Artillery Brigades, and Reserve Batteries. Thus they would take the Light Draught horses and mules, while riding-horses of the trooper class would find their way to Reserve Cavalry Depôts. It is the task of these Reserve Units to train both men and horses in order to provide the drafts for overseas. At Depôts, which specialized in the interesting work, officers' chargers of the incomparable thoroughbred, hunter, and polo pony breeds, such as no other country in the world can produce, were made to complete their "schooling."

In meeting the demands from France, therefore, the Remount Directorate at the War Office would call on the Reserve Units to provide each a quota of fit animals in proportion to its total strength in animals. As the fit animals were withdrawn so their places would be filled by unfits. It is the practice to-day, and it is why remount work has extended and expanded from the limits of the Department's own Depôts to these important units included among the Forces in Great Britain. A large issuing Depôt has been the collecting station of all animals earmarked for France. It, too, is situated close to the port of embarkation and may be well likened to the neck of the bottle through which all our war-horses and mules must pass on this the last stage of their long journey from the Western States of America and Canada to France.

If I admit at the outset that this book is incomplete and no more than one of impressions, based, however, on first-hand observation, I can at any rate advance the very good excuse that it is being written while we are still at the crisis of the war. There were obvious difficulties confronting any writer undertaking the task. They were difficulties consequent on not being able to survey the whole history from start to finish, in having things rather

out of perspective through the necessity of having to keep close to the surface of things. There were facts I might have revealed which must be kept sealed for sound military reasons. Wonderful things and amazing figures will be available for the light of the open book when the end comes. Till then I have to beg the reader's forbearance with any attempt to piece together certain es ential details in narrative form, beginning with the purchase of our war horses and mules, continuing with their preparation for active service, and concluding with their subsequent welfare in health and sickness in the main theatre of war.

After all, however, four years have passed during which much has happened to more than justify this modest volume of praise of our animals and those who have had to do with their management and employment. It will prove more than justified also if all in uniform, from the highest to the lowest, who have the responsibility of our war animals in their charge spare no endeavour to exercise every possible care in order that wastage shall be kept at the lowest possible mark. We must realize that the world's horse supply is not inexhaustible and that the drain on it since 1914 has been stupendous. The efficiency of our Armies depends on the preservation of our horse supply, and it is due both to ourselves as a nation and to the horses themselves that the fact should be understood. I believe that every soldier who has to do with horse or mule has come to love them for what they are and the grand work they have done and are doing in and out of the death zones. I want the public who have had no opportunity to know to share that admiration. If I despaired of their doing so I should not, in the midst of strenuous times, have voluntarily and most willingly taken up my pen. Circumstances brought me into intimate touch with them, and because I felt that the outside world ought to know, and indeed wanted to know, I begged for the opportunity to assume the task. The importunate man succeeded at last in enlisting the help of the War Office without which the necessary facilities for first-hand knowledge of the subject in all its phases would not have been forthcoming. So it is that I offer my grateful thanks and acknowledgments to the Quartermaster-General of the Forces (Sir John Cowans, G.C.M.G., K.C.B., M.V.O.), and to my own Chief, the Director of the Remount Department (Major-General Sir W. H. Birkbeck, K.C.B., C.M.G.), for their practical help. To Sir John Cowans, the most distinguished and brilliant administrator of the war, I am further indebted for permission to dedicate the volume, thereby imparting unique distinction to it.

At my request Brigadier-General T. R. L. Bate, who held a high position with the British Remount Commission in the United States and Canada, and now holds an important post elsewhere, has kindly contributed the chapter on the methods of purchase in those countries. It is a pleasure to acknowledge that "The Horse and the War" owes much to the beautiful illustrations by Captain Lionel Edwards, whose fine work must unquestionably gain in value from the fact that as a Remount Officer of much experience he has sketched from life and actual knowledge and not from imagination and hearsay.

CHAPTER II

The Raw Material

WE shall win the war. Of course. It may be sooner or later; but though, as the Prime Minister once suggested, the road may be rough and stony, the vista of peace be still obscured by thick mists, and the climb to victory tortuous and anxious, we shall win. And when that greatest day in history comes, and praise and honours and medals are being lavished among the armies of the victorious nations, will a thought be spared, one wonders, for the horse and the mule in their tens and hundreds of thousands that have contributed to the victory? Assuredly the vast and wonderful burden they have borne will touch the horse and animal lover. He will realize how indispensable they have been to victory, how vital to the Allies' successful prosecution of the war. But the general public in the land of the pre-eminent thoroughbred may never quite realize, because they have never understood, the importance of the horse for war purposes. When they begin to realize how the horse and the mule have been as essential in their way to defeating the Huns as "shells, shells, and more shells," they will begin to understand something of the debt they owe.

They will understand why in years gone by the horse-breeding societies of the United Kingdom begged the State to aid the breeding of horses for the Army. So, too, it will be accepted as evidence of Britain's unreadiness for the World War, if such evidence be necessary, that the country's resources for horsing the Expeditionary Forces, apart from the original Expeditionary Force of "contemptibles," were hopelessly and ridiculously inadequate. How, therefore, was the tremendous deficiency made good? Whence did the millions of horses and mules come? And what has been the manner of their coming and going to and from the United Kingdom? My object is to convey some idea to the reader of how the problem of the nation's horse supply for the armies was solved; to tell something of the conquest by the imported horse and mule from North America; and why it is that of all the breeds and cross-breeds of horses in the world the one from the United States and Canada has proved paramount and incomparably the best.

What we should have done had not North America's vast contribution to the world's war horse supply been a real fact, goodness knows. It is an uncomfortable reflection which, fortunately, need not be dwelt on. What we do know is that the amazing resources were known to exist—they were known in the South African War—and that in the early days of this war

they were tapped by British Remount Commissions with astonishing speed and prodigality. There could never have been any half-hearted buying, or the flow to Europe would have been interrupted with disastrous consequences. And this, too, quite apart from the fact that France has bought as extensively in America as we have, in addition to Italy's purchases! After all, apart from the great part played by motor transport—think of France's taxi-cab Army that issued from Paris and virtually decided the battle of the Marne!—the horse and the mule were essential for the guns, the transport, the ammunition columns, and all arms of mounted troops. The horse supply in all the theatres of war had to correspond *ad libitum* with the bewildering growth in numbers of men and guns.

Let me invite the reader to meet the horse and the mule as they arrive at a port in the United Kingdom and endeavour to give some idea of their personalities, their characteristics and, as impartially as may be, examine their merits and demerits. For, surely, it cannot fail to be of absorbing interest to know something of a more or less intimate nature about the horse that has made a great reputation in this war, that has saved the situation where the horsing of the armies is concerned, that, in short, has most convincingly "made good." Some day it will be revealed exactly how many horses were bought by agents of the Remount Service in the United Kingdom, and astonishing figures will be forthcoming, when the proper time arrives, to show the great numbers imported. Then it will be realized how immensely we have been dependent on the imports, and what a debt is owing to them, and at the same time to what a desperate pass we should have come had those imports not been available.

Let it be understood that in discussing the war-horse of to-day the individual in question is the animal officially classed as the "Light Draught." He is the outstanding success of the war. The other conspicuous success is the mule, but he is not a horse. He is just a mule—a law and character unto himself—and, therefore, calling for separate treatment, and to be judged only from his own unique and peculiar standpoint. We in the United Kingdom have produced our breeds and classes for war purposes. The Shire horse by size, weight and physique naturally filled the rôle of the heavy draught. The thoroughbred, the three-quarter and half-bred thoroughbred just as naturally have played the part of the charger, and no horse ever bred in America can beat the British riding-horse with thoroughbred blood in his veins. The pony bred in these islands has been a valuable asset, and hereafter many a man will bear tribute to his charger which has been a pony and classed for service purposes as an officer's cob. The Hackney horse has been utilized, but this breed produced but a "handful" as it were of the hundreds of thousands bought for our Armies.

The point to bear in mind is that, though America has sent us chargers, troop horses and cobs, that country must always be gratefully remembered for the light draught. He is the horse which has come in numbers quite out of proportion to other classes. He is the horse most typical of the millions of imports. Hardiness, placidity of temper, strength and power, virility of constitution, with what is called "good heart," versatility and extraordinary

Landing of American horses at an English Port.

activity for his size and weight—these are characteristics that have impressed themselves for all time on all who have had to do with him. The riding-horse from America is on the whole deceptive. He is usually high in the withers, suggesting that the shoulders are sloping and that he must carry the saddle in the right place. The truth is that the shoulder is straight more often than not, and the scapula narrow with a consequent loss of freedom in action which the riding man perfectly well understands. There are, of course, exceptions, and, perhaps, what is lost in positive correctness of action is compensated for by that measure of comfort to be derived from the " lope " or " tittupping " gait of the Yankee saddle horse.

But, whatever the class of horse, the fact remains that when they arrive in this country they come to us raw and rough to a degree, unkempt, ragged and mere caricatures of horses. We may pass over the time they spend in the large reception and " Seasoning " Depôts in America—that period during which they are brought together for inspection and purchase by the accredited buyers of the Remount Service, with their subsequent rail journey to a port of embarkation on the east coast of the United States—and introduce ourselves to them as they are first met on the transport which has brought them to the English port of disembarkation. As the war has gone on the arrangements on shipboard have improved with experience; and we may be sure that everything possible has been done to make the voyage as bearable as possible for the animals, so that loss should be avoided if humanly possible. Such minimum loss has been made possible, we may take it, through the employment of painstaking, conscientious and intelligent individuals in charge, judicious feeding to suit the unnatural conditions, and the observance of sanitary and hygienic conditions.

The results in such cases have been splendid. Take a recent example which came within the personal experience of the writer. A ship arrived from a port in the United States, having occupied about twenty days on the voyage. She had sailed with 1,270 animals, including nearly 1,000 mules, and some very bad weather had been experienced. Only one animal was lost on the voyage, through a sudden seizure which could not be combated. Let us, for example's sake, take note of these 1,269 animals, for they are typical of the war-horse in the rough state, before the horse-masters of the Remount Service have " ironed " them out for their work in France.

She is a big ship, and her length, except for the interval occupied by her engines and boilers, is used to accommodate the live cargo. The great thing is that she has come safely through danger zones and that she is at last alongside the berth at her destination with the welcome aliens ready for immediate disembarkation. There is no time lost. " You can begin to unload now," says the naval officer to the Remount Officer, and the latter's men are on board and leading off the first horses and mules in less time than it takes to write this. The ship has been about twenty days on the journey, and bad weather has been experienced, necessitating the closing down of hatches. Moreover, the cleaning-out has had to be carried out under difficulties which have grown more formidable as the voyage has lengthened. Below decks the atmosphere is heavy and unhealthy, and the fumes of the disinfectants mingle

From the ship to the Remount Depôt. A night-time hurried veterinary examination of the new-comers.

with ammonia gases. The horses are obviously used to what they have helped to create, and their keenness and alertness show that they have suffered no more than temporary inconvenience. They seem to know that something unusual is going to happen. There is no motion on the ship; the engines have ceased to throb, and the movements of the animals in their narrow stalls or pens seem more insistent. They know as well as we know that they are going to emerge from their imprisonment into the sweet, fresh air and the blinding light of day. The horses know. The mules are distrustful, because it is their one thought and principle in life to be suspicious and apprehensive. They fear more trouble.

Sô, out of the unsalubrious, gas-laden air and the forbidding gloom of the decks below stairs the first of the horses come quietly and with marked docility down the sloping "brows," or gangways, on to a foreign soil. They blink in the sunshine, shake their heads and neglected manes, and quietly submit to the first requirements of their new military existence. Some are sullen and soberly matter-of-fact, seemingly devoid of all excitement and emotions of any kind; some are nervous and distraught, wild-eyed, and betraying fear as if they cannot understand the violent upheavals that have occurred in their usually uneventful existences. These latter snort like the ancient war-horses were supposed to snort and breathe fire on the threshold of battle. The war-horse of the twentieth century, if he be not placid and unmoved, is at least mildly demonstrative when first "joining up" in England. Perhaps he is too "used-up," too weary of the sea, to protest too much; and perhaps, also, what we took to be a snort of annoyance and a dilated eye of apprehension were really nothing more than normal excitement that one unpleasant phase was over and that something unknown was being entered upon.

But the calm and placid new-comer is in an overwhelming majority. He carries himself bravely in spite of a soiled and unkempt appearance that suggests anything but the idea of bravery and the chivalry of battle. Shall we who saw and handled him then ever forget the impressions made by his coming? He came in several sizes and weights—the narrow, lightish-boned rider; the heavy "light draught," which is not as heavy and imposing as the heavy agricultural horses of the United Kingdom; and the light draught with bone, size and activity for the Field Artillery and quick-moving horse transport. This latter is the war-horse that has made history, and probably there were twenty of him to one of any other kind. He would not have impressed you then as he moved softly and quietly off the "brow." You would, perhaps, have laughed at anything less beautiful and inspiring, and you might have wondered at the boldness and seeming incompetence of our buyers on the other side. He was shoeless, long-haired, tousled-maned, ragged-hipped, and he almost dragged his tail on the ground, so long and full and caked with dirt was it. His neck had gone light and mean, his backbone stuck up like a knifeboard, and his ribs were pushing through his neglected hide.

Such was our war-horse in the rough, a true and faithful representation of the raw material rendered thus unpresentable by the flesh-weariness of

The Field Gun Horse from America on his arrival—"shoeless, long-haired, tousled-maned, ragged-hipped."

The same Field Gun Horse ready for France—"the well-fed, clean and healthy horse."

irksome and exacting existence on board ship. Yet, through it all, as he stamped and fretted to be free, and as he stepped on shore, he flung out a challenge to his new masters. He was willing to be born again. Blacks and greys there were in abundance. They were obviously the prevailing colours, and there were also, of course, bays and chestnuts; but the colour scheme afforded a contrast to that to which we in this country are used. Blacks and greys are by no means the dominant colours here. Then, after noting the colours, you would remember that the Percheron stallions of France are chiefly black and grey, and that the war-horse from the United States and Canada is first and foremost the progeny of the Percheron horses that were imported from France through all the years.

Certain characteristics belonged to them all. Take the black horse that has just stepped jauntily off the "brow" and which has neighed with a lustiness and inquisitiveness betokening health and a vitality quite opposed to his ungentlemanly appearance. He is 16 hands, and the first and last impression is of his thickness and sturdiness of physique.

This idea of thickness seems to belong to him in every respect. His head is plain and thick across the jowl; his neck is short, cresty and thick, and it passes abruptly into straight shoulders. Then his middle-piece is thick and capacious, and, though the croup is short, he is thick across the quarters because the loins are wide and inclined to be ragged. He stands on sound, clean legs, showing very little hair about the heels, but the legs are not orthodox as we would have them. The hocks are slightly away from him and he shows a tendency to be back at the knee; while the feet are big, flat and saucer-like in shape; too big, one would think, for the rest of the animal. Still, those all-important legs have splendid bone.

Yes, this black horse we are looking at is undoubtedly a stranger—a "Yank," as we have learned to designate him; but he is the great utility horse of the war, useful rather than ornamental. Through him and all of them the stamp of the Percheron in the breeding stands out clear and distinguished. It is there in the power of the quarters, the shortness and crestiness of the neck, the clean, sound legs, the hard constitution and good temper, and the willingness to work.

CHAPTER III

Buying British Remounts in America

By Brigadier-General T. R. F. Bate.

As quite two-thirds of the horses and practically all the mules used in the British Army in France and the other theatres of war come from the American Continent, it will, perhaps, be of interest to trace the history of the Army horse and mule from its source on the other side of the Atlantic till it reaches the remount depôts in the United Kingdom.

It is interesting to know that the first batch of American and Canadian horses arrived in England in October, 1914. In the early stages of the activities of the British Remount Commission in Canada and U.S.A. practically the whole continent was covered in the search for suitable animals. Later experience proved that it was more profitable from every point of view to centre all activities in the middle western states, which are *par excellence* the draught horse producing area of the continent.

The proposition in front of the Commission was to produce a steady flow of horses and mules to England at a rate varying between 25,000 and 10,000 a month. This proposition may roughly be divided under three headings: (1) The actual purchase; (2) care after purchase, including railway transit; (3) and embarkation.

Before describing the actual method of purchase it will be as well to make a brief analysis of the fortunes of the animal before he comes before the official purchaser. It has been found time and again that in purchasing such large numbers of animals as are in this case involved it is imperative to buy only from well-known and reliable horse dealers. Such dealers have their show-yards in large towns where the livestock business is a big concern. The chief centres used by us are Chicago, St. Paul (in Minnesota), Sioux City and Des Moines in Iowa, St. Louis, Kansas City and also, in the earlier stages, Toronto and Montreal in Canada. In each of these centres one, or perhaps, in some cases, two or three firms of reliable dealers engage to show to our purchaser so many horses a week.

Now, the big dealer buys most of the horses he shows, both buying himself and sending out agents among the farmers, among whom he has a regular *clientèle*. The dealer who cannot afford to put down a lot of ready money for purchase outright allows smaller dealers and also farmers to show horses under

his, the dealer's ægis, the small man having to pay the dealer so much on every horse bought by the Government inspector. Such horses are known as subject horses. This latter method, though in many ways undesirable, cannot be entirely eliminated. When it has been arranged with a dealer to show horses to one of our purchasers he is given a description of the class of animal required —height, weight, etc. After a few days' experience with the purchaser the dealer gets to know the type of horse that will be taken, and tells his buyers accordingly ; and very soon, if he is a good dealer, the " rejects " should be few and far between.

Dealers do not find it worth while to keep horses a day longer than necessary before they show them to the purchaser. I have often known horses taken off the train by the dealer in the morning and shown for purchase in the afternoon. In this way purchasers are confronted with the task of selecting suitable horses from animals in every sort of condition—some over-fat and soft, others hard and fit, while many are in very poor condition. This brings us to the actual method of purchase—our purchasers have all, or nearly all, been selected from men who have had lifelong experience in buying and handling horses. Each buying centre has its allotted one or more purchasers, each purchaser buying from one or more dealers, and each having his own veterinary officer. The procedure is always substantially the same, differing only in matters of detail.

At a suitable place in the dealer's yard there is a " show alley " where the purchaser stands. Each horse is walked up to him. Unless immediately rejected, it is then walked away and trotted, and if passed by the purchaser as desirable as regards conformation, it is handed on to the veterinary officer to be examined for soundness—including being galloped (cavalry horses ridden, draught horses driven) for wind. If passed by the veterinary officer it is put in a pen alongside—under the eye of both purchaser and veterinary officer—until the pen contains seven or ten horses, when the lot are branded with a broad arrow, purchaser's brand, etc. Manes of draught horses are hogged, tails trimmed, shoes, if any, removed ; after which the animals are put in the pens reserved for purchased animals. No animal is considered actually bought until it is branded ; and, in the case of heavy horses, the formality of weighing is insisted on before branding.

It may be interesting here to touch on the much debated question as to the number of horses one man can buy in a day before he loses his " eye." Few men agree on this point, and no doubt some men can buy more than others ; but after seeing many thousands of horses and mules purchased the writer is strongly of opinion that, as regards horses at any rate, there are few men who can buy more than 100 a day without laying themselves open to a strong probability of their " form " deteriorating.

Having now got to the period when the animal has become the property of the British Government, we come next to that stage of his existence which includes safe transportation to the Atlantic seaport, and all the machinery of organization which this entails. Before entering on such a descriptive itinerary it will be as well to discuss briefly two main principles, either of which it has been possible to adopt.

Testing an alleged riding horse before a British Government purchaser.

An even perfunctory knowledge of the map of North America will enable any one to realize the enormous expanse of country which has to be traversed between the purchase area in the middle western states and the embarkation area on the Atlantic seaboard. One of the most serious factors which has to be contended with in the horse business in North America—a factor which I venture to think is anything but widely understood in this country—is shipping fever, which, speaking untechnically, is a sort of influenza constantly resulting in pneumonia or similar pulmonary diseases. It is a deplorable, but indisputable, fact that over 70 per cent. of horses moved over rail contract this shipping fever—some directly and others a considerable period after detraining. So far, though researches are continually being made, only qualified success with preventive serum has been achieved. We have two possible principles to adopt: Should we keep the horses in the country a sufficient time to let them get over their shipping fever before embarkation; or should we embark them with the least possible delay—the latter alternative meaning the contraction of the disease on board ship and after arrival in the United Kingdom? The former alternative has been adopted, and, in the writer's opinion, there is no doubt whatever that it is the soundest plan. It will be seen easily that the adoption of the principle of keeping the animals in America till they are "salted" entails the upkeep of considerable organization, besides that of purchase on the other side of the Atlantic.

It has been found that the minimum period of detention from time of purchase till date of embarkation is seven weeks, and, though circumstances cannot always be such as to allow of this being adhered to, this procedure is adopted as closely as possible. A glance at the map will show that the area in operation is most simply divided into two zones—the purchasing zone and the embarkation zone. In each of these zones there is a system of remount depôts—situated as far as possible in places with suitable railway facilities.

It may be mentioned here that the chief sources of infection of shipping fever are dealers' yards, stockyards and railway cars, all of which, owing to their continual floative population, become so infected as to be almost hopeless of satisfactory sanitation. Consequently, horses, once they are purchased, are kept as brief a time as possible in any of the three. There is a law in the States which forbids any horses being kept on a train without off-loading, watering and feeding for longer than thirty-six hours. As most of the journeys from the purchasing zone are of several days' duration, it has been found necessary to form subsidiary remount depôts at suitable points on selected railways, such depôts being used as off-loading and feeding stations. All these depôts—purchasing area, embarkation area and off-loading stations—require and possess their necessary staffs of executive and veterinary officers and subordinate employés.

Now let us come to the movement of the animal itself. We left him just purchased walking out of the dealer's yard branded with the broad arrow, etc., and the property of the British Government. At some purchase points there are depôts in the vicinity, and the horses are walked over and come under the supervision of the depôt officer on the very day of purchase. At others the

Branding a British Government purchase in North America with the broad arrow.

depôt may, through force of circumstances, be located a short train journey away. In the latter case the purchasing officer has to make local arrangements until he has collected a sufficient number to fill a train, which varies from 300 to 600. In either case the animals get a rest for a week to ten days or perhaps a fortnight before starting on their real journey towards the embarkation area. During that time they are malleined in accordance with the glanders test. Those which show any symptoms of sickness are segregated, and from day to day the fittest are cut out and put into pens in which only those fit to travel, colloquially known as " shippers," are kept.

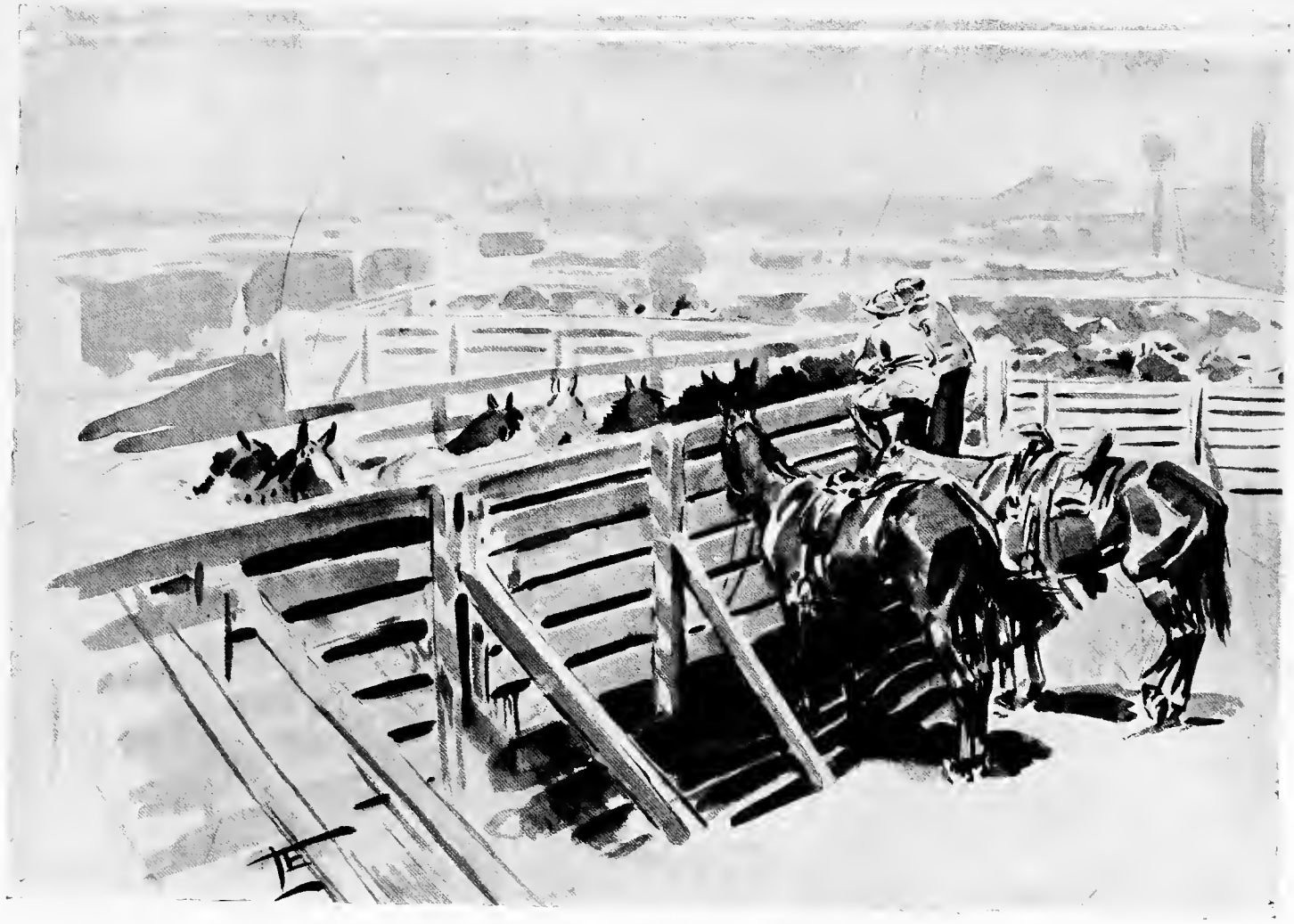
Every depôt has its veterinary hospital and staff, into which serious cases are put. Now let us imagine we are starting off with a trainload of " shippers " from a depôt in the purchasing area. First, we note that every horse on our train has had its temperature taken as a final precaution, and any found exceeding 101° are rejected and retained till another occasion. We are going on a journey of about thirty-six hours. If in winter, probably in a temperature of 25° below zero ; if in summer, it may be 110° in the shade. We are now entirely in the hands of the railway authorities, but our departure and probable time of arrival, with the numbers and classification of the animals on the train, have been wired on to the commanding officer of the off-loading depôt, where we are looking forward to having the horses taken off, rested, watered and fed.

Let us arrive ! We are met by various members of the off-loading depôt, probably including the C.O. and his veterinary officer. Off-loading is a quick process, and probably in half an hour every horse is out of the train. They are put into pens alongside the railway, when the sick and seedy-looking ones are again segregated from the fit, and hospital cases are taken off to the veterinary hospital. This, I venture to think, gives a general idea of how transportation is organized and carried out.

The next stage or stages are worked on exactly the same plan ; always remembering that every horse is examined and every horse has his temperature taken before starting on any railway journey. Theoretically this should mean that only fit horses arrive in the depôts in the embarkation area. Practically it means that, though it is impossible, or appears impossible, not to receive some sick horses in the embarkation depôts, at any rate every possible precaution has been taken to make the number of sick as small as possible. No effort is spared to try and keep the embarkation depôts free from being clogged with numbers of sick animals. In the embarkation depôts the animals get a final rest of several weeks, which, with a system of extensive runs, makes a sort of finishing process before going on board ship.

Embarkation itself requires little or no description except to remark that the final selection for fitness of animals from the embarkation depôts for sending on board ship is made with even greater care than former inspections. In this connection it must be mentioned that the adequateness of the arrangements on board ship, for which the embarkation officer—also a remount official—is responsible, is a priceless factor in the matter of the condition of the animals on their arrival in the United Kingdom.

So far little or no mention has been made of the different types of horses which are purchased for the Army, nor has the mule been more than barely



Method of loading a remount train in America to hold 1400 animals.

mentioned. Either of these subjects is worthy of more space than can be devoted to it in this chapter, but a brief description of both would appear to be desirable. Broadly speaking, three types or classifications of horses have been purchased and exported from the United States and Canada—cavalry, light artillery, heavy artillery. Experts have known for some time, and our purchasing activities have proved beyond contention, that the cavalry horse as we know him in England does not exist in North America in any numbers which are appreciable for modern war requirements. What have been bought as cavalry are the best that can be procured, but that is all. The cavalry horse is not a commercial factor in America, and that, in a nutshell, is the reason of the scarcity of the type.

The light artillery horse is the commercial equine article of the country, and has proved himself good through and through. It is a remarkable fact that after the export of hundreds of thousands of this class of horse the high standard is still being maintained. The requirements for the light artillery horse are : Height, 15 h. 2 ins. to 16 h., weight about 1,200 lb., short on the leg, short in the back, strong in the neck and quarters, and as much quality as procurable. The best of these horses are bought from the states of Iowa and Illinois. The strains of Shire, Clyde, Belgian, Normandy and Percheron are the predominant types, and it is a matter of contention which is the best. One can only give one's opinion that, from what one has seen, a predominating Percheron strain appears to give by far the best results.

Heavy artillery horse production in any quantities in America has been a recent innovation, and it has been, and is, a very difficult matter to procure an appreciable number of such horses which possess the requisite weight. Two classifications have been purchased so far: those of a minimum weight of 1,400 lb., and those of a minimum weight of 1,500 lb. It must be remembered that American and Canadian breeders hate hair on the leg, and consequently the so-called heavy horse of North America with practically clean legs never looks the weight of his cousin in this country. Complaint has been made that the American heavy horse is too light ; but when the writer left America in March, 1918, there were then coming in many heavy horses which would compare well with our heavy cart-horses. In this class, again, Iowa and Illinois are predominant, though many good heavy horses have been bought in Canada. The same strains are predominant, and, though the Percheron maintains his high place, the Shire blood runs him very close.

At long last we come to the mule, which, though he occupies this tardy position, is probably the most serviceable and satisfactory animal used in the war. Indeed, the writer, who has had experience of both horses and mules with a battery in two theatres of the war, would unhesitatingly say that if he had the remounting arrangements for any future war, mules would supplant horses to the greatest possible extent. Though for purchasing purposes mules in America have been divided at different times into several classifications, as a general principle mules may be regarded as being divided into three main categories—heavy mules for heavy artillery purposes in Eastern war theatres, light draught mules which have practically taken the place of horses in wheeled transport other than artillery, and pack mules for pack transport. The heavy mules run

to a height of 16 h. 2 ins. or even 16 h. 3 ins., and weigh about 1,300 lb. The light draught mules are between 15 h. and 13 h. 3 ins., and weigh about 1,100 lb., while the pack mules are under 15 h. down to 14 h. 1 in. All these types of mules are found in the middle western states of Missouri and Kansas, and the southern states of Tennessee, Texas, Alabama and Georgia, though one does not get the larger type much out of Missouri and Kansas.

In the earlier stages of the war cotton, for which industry the mule is entirley used, was down to 6 cents a pound and mules were easy to get and procurable at reasonable prices. Now cotton is up to 27 cents a pound, sugar and other agricultural industries are at a premium, and owing to these causes, coupled with the fact that the capital number of mules available was never an inexhaustible quantity, the supply of mules is daily becoming more difficult.

In conclusion, it is only fair to describe a few of the sterling qualities of this often vilified and still more often caricatured animal. The mule is practically immune from many of the diseases inherent in the horse—notably he suffers less than half as much from shipping fever. He, as a general rule, has sounder legs than the horse. He can certainly stand more hardships. He eats less and is less particular about his food, though more particular about his water. He thrives on work. Great as has been the success of the American gun horse, still greater, though perhaps less appreciated, have been the war qualities of the American mule. Long may he thrive!

CHAPTER IV

The Finished Article

IF more were required to justify the Allies' splendid war-horse, it is the firm conviction, which cannot be emphasized too insistently, that the light draught of American origin has come to stay in this country. Heaven forbid that the world shall ever again be racked by the agonies of such another war as this, or, indeed, of war at all, so that the question does not necessarily arise of establishing big breeding depôts throughout the United Kingdom at which the type shall be bred and reared in readiness for another day. It is, nevertheless, safe at this stage to prophesy that the Percheron-bred light draught horse will surely be introduced to this country as a permanent institution. Actually I wrote this prior to the formation in this country of the British Percheron Horse Society. Already now there are in England pure-bred Percerhon stallions and mares, which have been imported from France. They will take their place in history as the pioneers of the light draught breed in the United Kingdom, just as will the best and most typical of the thousands of mares that will be brought back to us after surviving the rigours and perils of active service. Clearly such mares will be recovered and retained so that they may perpetuate their fine characteristics. For, apart from their value as war-horses, they must attract the employer of the general utility horse.

After all, they are a distinct type. Some may be better than others, and some may be heavier in physique than the vast majority, but these latter are as if they had all come out of the same mould. By comparison the British light draught is a nondescript, a misfit. He could be anything—a half-bred Shire or Clydesdale, a Welsh cob, a heavyish Hackney, a Cleveland bay, or a heavy-weight "hunter" without true hunter lines and action. All these odds and ends of horse-flesh we have seen pass through remount depôts *en route* to the theatres of war. They were classed as light draught because they were neither heavy draught nor riding horse. But the Yankee was essentially and absolutely a light draught horse, true to type, varying not at all in character and very little in the non-essential details. He is the real equine hero of the war, and by his triumphs, which must be as real in peace time as in war, he simply must take his place, and an important one, too, in the horse population of these Islands.

Some further light may be shed on his personality if we resume our associa-

A scene reminiscent of early days in the war. Picketed in the open and fully exposed to the weather.

tion with him at the point at which we left him in the last chapter. He had then stepped ashore—a stranger, indeed, and an obvious alien—from the steamer which had been his stable for about three weeks. We may remind you of his dishevelled state, and a critical onlooker, having no knowledge of his virtues, might have been excused for promptly arriving at wholly wrong conclusions. Let it not be forgotten that a horse thus "cribbed, cabined, confined" on shipboard must inevitably lose condition and show signs of physical wastage. Some, of course, will do so more than others. It is a question influenced as to degree by temperament, for the nervous animal must worry and fuss more than his phlegmatic and stoical companion. Then the feeding is not conducive to the retention of condition. Normal feeding on hard corn would quickly produce fever in the feet and intestinal complications in a horse which is denied all chance of exercise and which must stand in a very narrow stall in an unhealthy atmosphere for three weeks. Thus it is that the diet, chiefly of bran and hay, must be low to suit the unnatural conditions. The visitor is now the property of the British taxpayer, and progress is commenced the moment he enters one of the remount depôts. He has to be made fit and trained for his new career. If he were not such a good and sensible horse the work of remount officers would be made ever so much more arduous than it is. It is their good fortune that the material is so pliable to the methods adopted. Think of the complications if the process of acclimatisation, where these horses are concerned, were long and tedious, or of the delay if their temperament were less placid and yielding than it is. We may think that conditioning and acclimatisation, as apart from training, are hurried; but we are at war, and what would be ideal in peace time is made impossible by the ruthless and inexorable exigencies of war. What a good thing, therefore, that he comes on as quickly as he does! Training the American light draught is the least difficult of all the details to be observed. Rare indeed is the animal that is a confirmed shirker and jibber in our artillery harness, and even he surrenders in time. Vice is found in very infrequent instances, but more often than not it is the product of cruelty and misunderstanding at some time rather than of nature itself.

See now that raw-boned, dishevelled horse that stepped ashore only a week before. He has had a few days' rest and a change of diet, his feeds containing something more palatable and satisfying than bran and hay. The clipping machine has caused him to discard the guise of rags and tatters; the tangled mane is off and the outline of the cresty, strong neck stands out clear and distinct; the tail is no longer flowing and bedraggled, but has been neatly squared off to about the depth of the hocks; while the spreading hoofs have been shaped and now carry shoes. His eye is clear and healthy, and he is taking a quiet and intelligent interest in life, especially at feed times. For the "Yank" is a rare "doer." A month hence and the angularities are distinctly less acute. He has lost the "ribby" appearance, and is undoubtedly thriving on the none too lavish rations authorized by Government. He is being regularly exercised now, and, if his progress has not been checked by those troubles that beset the horse when compelled to endure what are practically out-of-door stable conditions, he is certainly well on the road to

France. He takes his place in the gun team with a duck-like partiality for water, and every day that passes he thickens and muscles-up in a way that gratifies the representatives of the Remount Service. This rapidity of acclimatisation and fluent adaptability to entirely new conditions as regards stabling, and his stout resistance to all ills of the flesh, excepting, perhaps, certain skin troubles more or less indigenous to the land of his origin, are features of his apprenticeship to the making of war. No doubt the ideal thing would be to give him plenty of time in which to acclimatise, for the reason that his improvement is probably more apparent than real; but in war-time ideals must be scrapped or adjusted and shaped by circumstances. That is why the Yankee light draught is passed out of his novitiate in this country and is ready in an incredibly short time to resume his interrupted journey to France.

Here I am reminded again of the colour question. He is, as already noted, chiefly grey, steel grey or black, sometimes bay, and infrequently chestnut. Shattered is the notion that greys are not desirable for modern war because they are too conspicuous. This is the era of *camouflage*, with its devices and weird tricks to deceive. Colour does not possess that importance which attached to it before the advent of the *camouflage* officer.

To see him as one of a team of gun horses is to enjoy a delightful spectacle. He is active, willing, under instant command, and he is imposing. Ask any officer of Field Artillery and, where the lighter kind of horses with galloping conformation are concerned, any officer of Horse Artillery; they will, I am sure, give him an excellent "chit." Ask them which type of horse has best withstood the rigours and exhausting exposure of active service in Flanders, and they will unhesitatingly declare in favour of our friend from America. The heavy horse of this country has succumbed while the half-bred Percherons have still been resisting mud, wind, rain, gruelling hard work and pneumonia. And the extraordinary thing is that in the fifth year of war America can still supply them and that the quality is as good as ever. Certainly it is just as well that this should be so, since it is quite certain that no European country could have maintained its armies for a three years' war except by purchase abroad. The mystery is how America came to have so many horses available, and how they were broken and utilized over there.

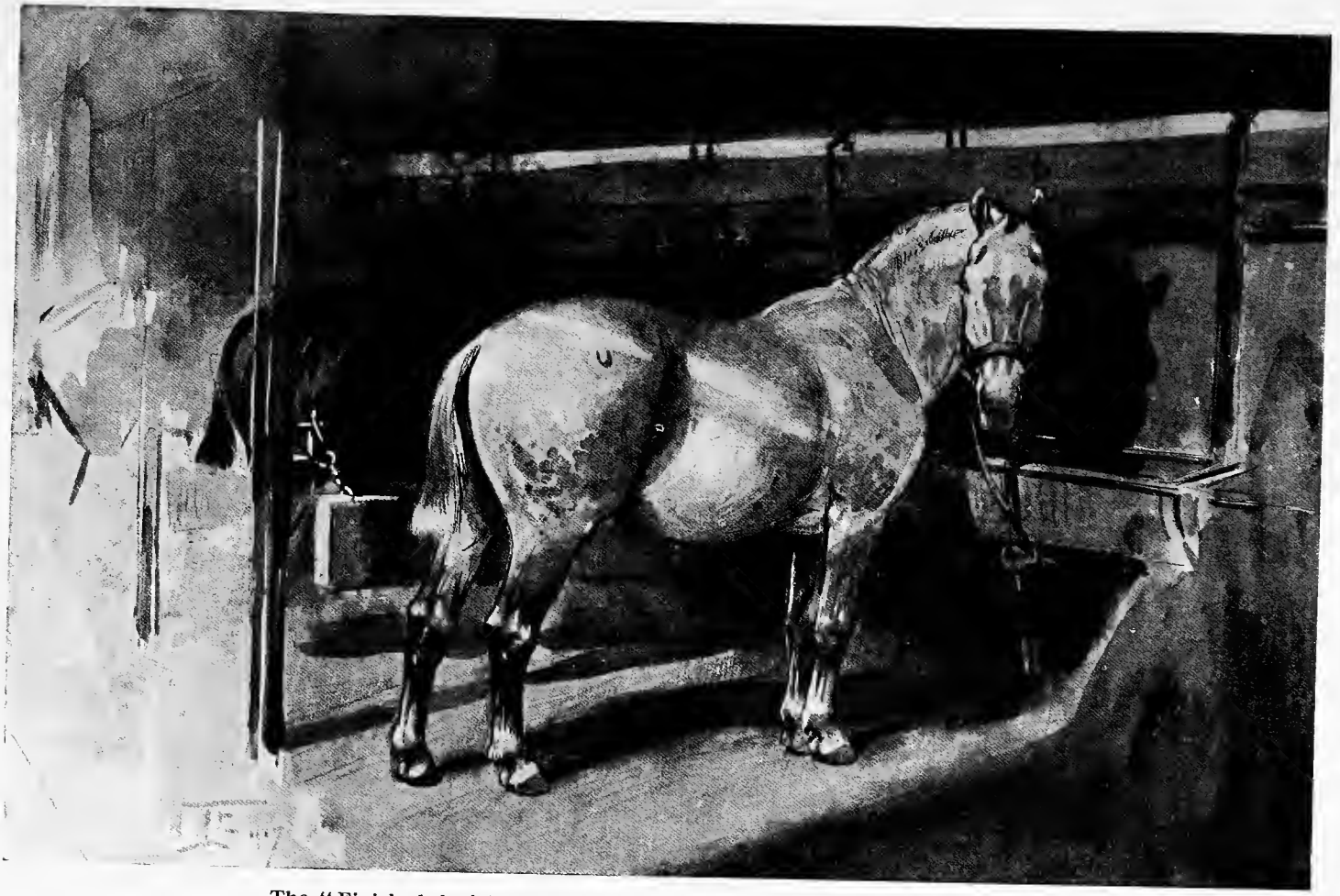
Apart from questions of conformation, weight and temperament, the real test of the war-horse must be one of endurance, of the capacity to resist exposure and hardship, to survive longest the trying conditions imposed by picketing on mud and in the open behind the fighting lines. It is the crucial test, and the horse which has answered it best is the American light draught. There is nothing in extenuation to be said for other draught horses after that. The "Yank" has beaten them all. It is reasonable to infer from this that while the transition of the stable-kept English horse to the mud and exposure of France is a doubtful one, the same thing, where the American is concerned, is made possible by reason of the conditions under which the latter has been bred and reared on the "runs" of the United States and Canada.

Every horse bought for the Army must of necessity be introduced straight-away to some degree of exposure as compared with his pre-military career.

That is due to the "exigencies of the Service"—a most convenient phrase to use in many more instances and senses than this one—and simple necessity of having to legislate for thousands and tens of thousands. Thus the four largest Remount Depôts in the United Kingdom are arranged on the principle of long rows of stalls of fifty or a hundred apiece, open to the weather except for the not unimportant fact that they are roofed. The same principle obtains in the Depôts and Veterinary Hospitals in France, though much is done in the matter of extending the roofs well beyond the quarters of the horses, and in the erection of wind screens as some rough protection against the weather. It will be understood that in this way every opportunity is given to the latest-joined equine recruit to harden itself and so prepare for probably more severe exposure in the actual theatres of war.

Remount officers must take this war-time feature of stabling into serious calculation in the feeding and training of all classes of horses. They have to be made fit, and the process cannot be made easy by abundance of food, a warm box knee-deep in straw and heavy rugs in winter time; such luxuries have no place in war. The semi-exposed lines, whether they be those of Remount Squadrons, Cavalry Squadrons or of Field Batteries, are the first home of the war-horse and mule whether they have just arrived from over-seas or have been bought in the United Kingdom. Obviously a horse which feels the cold very much and has delicate respiratory organs is not going to do well. His acclimatisation is going to be slow and gradual, but even he will "come" in time. Apart altogether from military necessity there may be much to recommend the principle. The sudden transition from stable to semi-open lines will frequently induce catarrh and coughs. They have to be carefully guarded against lest serious pulmonary troubles should supervene. It was such troubles that found out the weak spot in the heavy Shire and Clydesdale horses which were bought in large numbers during the first three years of the war. They simply could not battle against the conditions of Army stabling. Once, however, the catarrh has disappeared the Remount rapidly becomes hard and fit, and when his time comes he is far better able to "keep a-going" under active service conditions than when he was apparently fit before the hardening process had been entered upon.

Mr. Wayne Dinsmore, the very able Secretary of the influential Percheron Horse Society of America, has given us a reason why the American light draught horses survive the weather test so well. They are more or less hardened by the nature of their life from birth, and the fact, of course, is not peculiar to one generation. Of our English horses the charger class with thoroughbred blood in them, either whole or in part, have done well, though the principle would not be the one ordinarily adopted when dealing with our hunters and high-class riding horses in peace time. They have required a good deal of nursing and watching, and wanted all, if not more than, the ration of hay and corn allowed them. The maximum amount of self-created bodily warmth is essential to make up for open stabling, which is often swept by chilling winds. A horse at liberty in a field can exercise himself in the hardest weather; far otherwise is it with him when tied up in a semi-open stall. Really it is wonderful how they have adapted themselves to the drastic



The "Finished Article" recognizes "Feed" when sounded on the bugle.

change. No blankets to wear when they travel, no knee boots and tail bandages as a protection against possible disfigurement, but instead they are sent to their destination on the first stage of their journey overseas eight or nine in a truck. Once that same truck carried cattle, sheep or pigs to a market town. Now it is the équipage de luxe of the charger or the mule.

Every horse should have his proper job in the Army. That there may be misfits is a matter for the buyer's conscience. Those at the head define the types required and issue instructions accordingly. If an animal is neither a heavy draught, a light draught, a charger, an officer's cob, a cavalry horse, an artillery riding-horse nor a pack-horse, then there is only one class remaining for him. He is a nondescript. He may have his uses in civil life, but most certainly he should never have been bought at the public expense for some obscure military purpose. I suppose it is human nature for one commissioned critic to say contemptuously of the Remount buyer: "Whatever was he thinking about to buy a *thing* like that!" Yet when you come to think of the hundreds of thousands bought here and abroad the number of nondescripts or bad bargains has been extraordinarily few. And, of course, an animal may degenerate, and frequently does, after wear and tear. Take the case of the cavalry horse that develops faulty action. He becomes dangerous to ride by reason of his susceptibility to lameness. His limited physique does not fit him for transport, and he therefore loses his usefulness because it is quite evident he would be too tall for pack purposes. One could pursue this line of thought indefinitely, but after all there is far more satisfaction in following the doings of the horse and mule while they are in training for active service and later when they actually embark upon it. The same serious attention must be paid to the riding-horses as to the draught animals. The former have to be schooled just as the latter must learn their team work in the batteries, or the wagons of the Divisional Ammunition Column, or Army Service Corps Train Transport.

The day comes, and that soon enough, when the gun horse is ready for active service. Orders come for his transfer to France, and in pursuance of them he is assembled at the great depôt which is contiguous to the port of embarkation. Actually, as well as in theory, he should now be fit for the real thing. He is the finished article, the well-fed, clean and healthy horse which has emerged from that steamer-soiled and ragged creature that was put ashore here two or three months before.

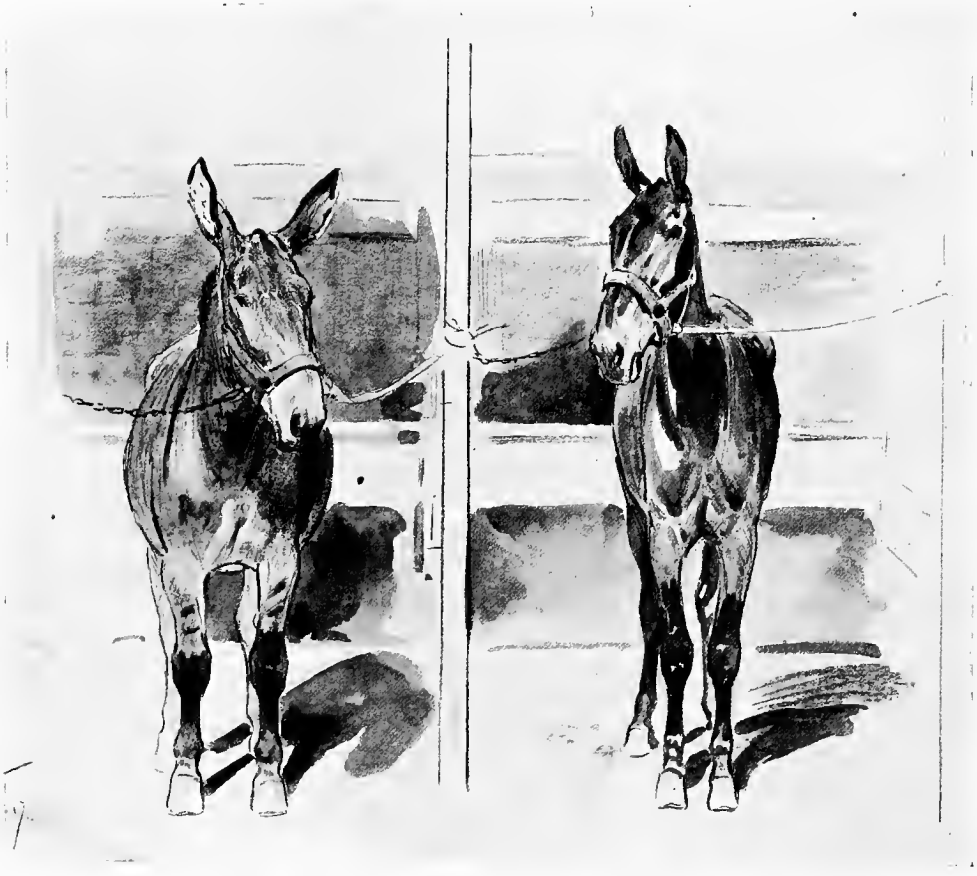
CHAPTER V

The Gallant Mule

MULES are a fascinating subject, whether dealt with on paper by the man with a pen or by the artist with a brush. Most men who wield neither a pen nor a brush would desire no other acquaintance since they have no understanding of the fascination. Perhaps I should not say "most men." Most men are in the Army, and what gentleman in khaki has not some slight nodding acquaintance with his mule *confrère* in the Army? They are both battling in the same cause, both living on Army rations, and both, no doubt, longing for victory and the end of war. Many men, therefore, do not despise the mule—only the few who do not know him and do not want to know him. The difficulty, from a writer's point of view, is to know exactly how to treat him. Seriously or lightly? As a beast of burden and haulage which has assisted enormously the Allies' waging of war and will continue to do so until the closing of the book? Or as an animal with more eccentricities of character and undeniable virtues than any other creature on God's earth—as, in fact, just a mule? Where to begin and where to end? It seems to me that one is forced into a compromise, and that a middle course is the only one to take; for if you must dilate on his extraordinary utility you must of necessity take into the reckoning his oddities and delineate those donkey characteristics that defy temper and patience and more often than not transform your serious attitude to mirthful mocking and weird despair. How can you treat consistently a conglomerate mixture of stolidity, stubbornness, slyness, willingness, temper, sullenness, humour, contentment, waywardness and cunning with no knowledge of which vice or virtue is going to assert itself next?

It is no use wondering how many tens of thousands of mules have been brought to Europe from North and South America, chiefly the North, since August of '14, all conscripted in the Allies' cause. The figures must be an after-the-war revelation, but I know many of us would like to possess, say, war bonds for as many as we have seen and handled. And we are still alive to tell a tale of admiration! Perhaps if I say a quarter of a million I shall not be very wide of the mark. If the real horse of the war has been the light draught from America, the mule has been, and is, just as essential in his own peculiar way. Often and often he has done what the horse has failed to do. He has survived and outlasted him, and, maybe, has shown his perversity by apparent enjoy-

ment of the awful din of battles, the deep mud and piercing cold of France, or the heat and flies of the East. His temper and constitution have remained whole, while the specimens of his mother's branch of the species have cracked and fallen by the wayside. Given his liquid refreshment and his humbler rations it takes a lot to put a mule out of action. He has even kindled enthusiasm among ardent horse-lovers who were once prejudiced against him and



The right-shaped mule. **The wrong-shaped mule.**

despised the donkey in his outline and demeanour. So in time they have come to say: "Give us mules for this job of war rather than horses." A strange and yet true conversion!

Again, as when writing of the American light draught horses, one marvels that America's supply should have been so abundant. They are coming still, travelling well over the much troubled seas, and picking up rapidly on arrival in a way which says much for their sangfroid and entire indifference to new

surroundings, strange white faces, and the conditions imposed in a country at war. They have been reluctant to step aboard ship on the other side, but, when once packed in steep holds and breathing a gassy atmosphere, too pungent for all humans—except callous and leather-lunged muleteers—they soon become reconciled and contented to the point of being outraged and annoyed when asked to quit again. The acme of perversity, you see, but nevertheless quaintly characteristic.

They vary, of course, in this regard. Some are so mournful and devoid of expression, too unconscious of their own existence, that they climb the gangways to the main deck and descend the " brow " to the shore with all the solemn good sense and tractability in the world. They are the good mules that never want to slip into wrong-doing, that take a cuff or a blow as unresponsively as they do a mark of affection, that gaze vacantly on the shoeing-smith when he is tinkering with their donkey feet, and only show a spark of consciousness when they see food and are unable to reach it. The bad mule, not because he is really wicked, does not like to be hurried, worried or interfered with if at the psychological moment he happens to be feeling more like a donkey than a horse, or, maybe, is concentrating on the vices of both and the virtues of neither. He gets " worser and worser " and in the end will submit only to the *fortiter in re* rather than the *suaviter in modo* methods of those who from experience have not come to meet him unequipped with a long rope and a breeching with which to haul him among his tribe already on shore. At the moment he is hating everybody and everything. He is distinctly nasty. He will kick unkindly at his neighbour in that susceptible area between the fore and hind legs. He may even endeavour to eat the rope by which he is being led, and his new khaki-clad acquaintance has to admit that his heels have an uncommonly long reach. Nor are his forelegs to be ignored. A mule can box and strike with them most unpleasantly. But in ninety cases out of a hundred he is not always going to defy disciplinary methods, especially when quietness is judiciously mixed with firmness. Never crack whips or shout with a sensitive mule. He will only get worse. The foundation of all successful methods with these uncertain tempered creatures is quietness. The man who makes a noise does so because he is afraid of the mule and really hates him at sight. The mule also hates him then and always.

If this were anything more than a chapter of impressions gained at first hand I might be expected to deal with the mule from a scientific point of view, dwelling on his hybrid origin and the ban placed on him by nature to reproduce his like as a distinct species. One might enter on a vast field of conjecture as to why there should be freakish colourings and markings and distinct suggestions of the wild ass and zebra. The prevailing colour of the tens of thousands purchased on behalf of this country is brown, but you will also see a fair percentage of bays, chestnuts, greys and duns, and an occasional " smoky blue." Most of the duns and a few chestnuts have a strongly defined black line running the length of the neck and back right into the tail, with dark zebra-like bars about the shoulders, knees and hocks. Some have had white legs, but they have been very rare.

Then you will be told on some authority that successful mule breeding

cannot be carried on above certain latitudes north of the Equator and below a certain line south of the Equator. It is why, the experts say, the United States does so much better than her neighbour, Canada. The point, however, is not one I am prepared to develop. But the suggestion, seriously put forward, that one nigger can get more work out of a team of mules than any white man may be true enough. The theory seems to fit in with the weird psychology of the animal. " A fellow-feeling makes one wondrous kind ! " Clearly a mule takes a deal of understanding, and the inference is that a white man's brain is scarcely equal to the strain. For, after all, the best meaning of our soldiers who have had to do with them are constantly being rudely checked just when they imagined they had arrived at a perfect understanding.

The artist has, for instance, noticed quite a common incident. There is the wrong and the right way of leading a mule to water or to any place where his presence may be required. The man who looks at the mule while he tugs at his head cannot appreciate the animal's unwillingness to move along with him. " Don't look at 'im," shouts the N.C.O., " 'e doesn't like yer face." And the recruit, feeling rather hurt, turns away to hide his blushes. The mule at once moves off after him. The ridiculous creature will not be pulled at. He is a sure winner at that game, just the same as when he wants to go east and the man on the rope lead wants him to go west. Both go east until the man adopts new methods. It is wonderful how bull-headed an obstinate mule can be. I have seen him draw two or three men whither he willed, all of them hanging on to the rope lead and the head collar. The same mule works all right in harness and never does wrong, only he is conscious of his own strength at inconvenient times and a horse is not ; or, perhaps, the latter is too dignified to indulge in such unseelmy capers.

I have known few mules that were not suspicious that someone was plotting to do something unpleasant to them. There is about them an ever-present sense of apprehension. Pass along a line of mules, either head in or tail on, and they regard you furtively and with deep distrust. Obviously they do not like the look of you. The ears swing significantly, together or inconsequently, and each mule never takes his sullen eyes off you. Did a horse do the same you would say that he had been ill treated at some time. Really a mule talks to his neighbour with his ears. It is a kind of signalling ; and if you learn to read the language of those long uprights, winking and nodding, you will really begin to know something worth knowing about mules. I have seen a line of mules in single file walking quietly towards the " brow," which is the gangway between the dock and the ship. The first one steps confidently on the " brow " and half-way up he puts one ear back and cocks the other one, at the same time pushing his toes into the flooring. He is not quite sure about what he is doing or being done by.

Of course, his remonstrance comes at an awkward time ; but the trouble is that the mule behind has seen the one ear go back, and as he does the same thing to the fellow immediately in his wake, and so on right down the line, the whole lot are very soon in a state of quiet revolt. Do not shout and bully them or the ship may be delayed sailing. Devote all your attention to the leader, and when the donkey in him has given way to the more aristocratic

The wrong and the right way of leading a mule. He prefers your back to your face.

side of his parentage the procession will be resumed. They will follow like good sheep that dislike being separated.

Sometimes one doubts very seriously, but on the whole I am inclined to believe that the "moke" has a distinct sense of humour. So many funny things have been said and written about him that the general public undoubtedly believes him to be a funny beast, that is, when he is not a savage one. Both ideas are exaggerated. The idea of humour probably arises out of

Often a little more serious than "a certain liveliness."

inquisitiveness. When not working he must be finding something to do with legs and mouth. I am reminded of an incident in an advanced mule line near Ypres. A number of our friends were tethered in the open on a long rope, and a farrier was engaged in shoeing one. The mule thus being attended to stood quietly enough, and the stooping farrier was performing his task so conscientiously and well that he was naturally astonished when the next mule endeavoured to take a mouthful from the seat of his breeches. Of course, he turned round sharply, as one would on being stung in a particularly susceptible part of the anatomy, and, while his back was turned once more, the mule he had

been shoeing gave him a sly kick on that same unoffending seat. Was that savagery? Of course not. Jack and Jenny were not vicious; they just wanted something to do.

If mules were really as wicked as popular belief suggests, think of the havoc they could work in our great Remount Depôts, where the men are not physically fit for combatant units, but may have been, say, piano-tuners, paper-hangers or fried-fish merchants before King and Country called—or fetched—them. You can have courage which is the product of ignorance of what you are taking on. In the same way you would have seen the bespectacled piano-tuner rushing in among the hungry animals at feeding times coming out unscathed and in no way conscious that he has escaped contact with heels that were being uplifted for fear that the feed might be taken away again the next instant to being given. Another man may have hesitated and shouted—fatal preliminaries—and from that moment he and the "donkeys" lose no love between them.

The grudge which thus has small beginnings does not give way to feelings of tender regard when after patient grooming he sees the perverse creature take the first opportunity of rolling in sand or mud, the sandier and muddier the better. How can they live amicably together after the man has been blamed for inefficient grooming? Actually the height of mule joy, next to satisfying a healthy appetite, is to roll. Why this should be so I do not pretend to know except that the disconcerting habit doubtless comes of the donkey blood in his veins. Is it not among one's earliest memories of learning to ride? From a military point of view there is much to censure in the irregular proceeding; for they almost always do it before you have time to remove their packs and very often just as you have restored the packs to their backs. I have said that he gets into mischief for want of something to do. A long railway journey, for instance, bores him horribly. Hence you will find when the trucks arrive at their destination that each has made a slow meal off the other's rope halter and head rope. They have then made a start on the woodwork of the trucks. Now, it will be understood that he must have great merits in war as a set-off to these pernicious habits.

Most mules can buck, but few in my experience are really bad ones in the sense that they are vicious and therefore dangerous. Take the average one that bucks. Not only will he do it without previous warning, but often with his ears pricked. I am sure those pricked ears mean something. You would think it impossible for one to buck so thoroughly and skilfully as to get himself out of his saddle without breaking the girths. Yet it has been known. My illustrator has been good enough to show the simplest method of settling the bucker; for, unlike the bucking horse, which is practically incorrigible, the mule quickly gives in. The head collar of the offender is tied close to a quiet old mule of unimpeachable character, and he is then mounted. Short of lying down he is unable to dislodge the rider because he is unable to get his head down to buck.

How often you have seen illustrations in the papers during the war of mule races behind the lines on the various fronts. Almost invariably they have been treated in comic vein, but it is nevertheless true that the animals can jump

cleverly and well over fences, and at a fast pace too. As far as we have come to understand modern warfare, the mule has not come to be regarded as a cavalry remount, so that his jumping proclivities have not been developed in a serious way. But the fact remains that he might be thus schooled.

There is no need in concluding this chapter, to write of his admirable qualities in the work of transporting food and munitions to the troops holding the trenches. I have before me as I write a letter from a transport officer in France, who remarks: "I cannot speak too highly of the mule as a most

By tying a bucking mule close to the head of a quiet mule the vice can soon be conquered. He cannot get his head down to buck in really serious fashion.

valuable and useful beast." It is the opinion of all who have to do with them in the many ways in which they are employed. The life of the mule at the front is longer than that of the average horse because he can better adapt himself to disagreeable things and tasks. He can endure more, exist on less and plainer food, and the machinery of his constitution does not run down so rapidly or so often. He just wants to be understood and treated accordingly. And, though the ideal type of draught mule—his body built on the lines of a horse, square, with the legs coming out of each corner, wide in the chest and barrel, with short, powerful legs—is a splendid beast of burden in modern war,

the other type shown by the artist has his many uses. The latter may be well bred on the dam's side because he is weedy, with a horse's fine coat and shorter ears; he is also light of bone, too long in the leg, flat-sided, and both forelegs seem to come out of the same hole as it were. Yet it is true of mules that they work in all shapes; for if it were not so there would be no place for the many that do not correspond with the artist's conception of the ideal type of draught mule. One of the many wonders of the war has certainly to do with the tens of thousands of mules transported from the Western to the Eastern Hemisphere and now actively pursuing the big part assigned them in the Great Adventure.

Musings of a Mule

I AM only a common or garden mule
Who was bred in the U.S.A.
I was born in a barn on a Western farm
Many thousands of miles away
From where I am munching a Government lunch
At Great Britain's expense to-day.

With dozens of others I knew, and have seen,
In my Little Grey Home in the West,
Where the grazing was succulent, luscious and green,
And Life was a bit of a jest,
I have sniffed the salt breeze blowing over the seas
And I've landed in France with the rest.

The journey was horrid—a horrible dream
Was the loading—its shindy and row
And the people expecting a moke to be keen
To swarm up a frightening "brow"
And slither down ramps that were greasy and damp
To a standing unfit for a cow.

They packed us like herrings 'way down in the hold,
With never a thought nor a care
For animals worthy more Government gold
Than all of the rest who were there;
And the best spot, of course, was reserved for the horse,
Who *had* to have plenty of air.

Well, we jibbed and we strafed and we kicked the Light Draught
And I planted my heels in the hide
Of a man on the ship who was flicking a whip
And whose manners I could not abide:
But I've travelled so often since then in the trucks
I have learnt how to swallow my pride,
And I go where I'm put without lifting a foot
For a rag song and dance on the side.

Many months at a time I was up on the Somme
In the rain and the mud and the mire :
We were " packing " the shells to the various Hells
In the dips of the vast undulations and dells
Where the field guns were belching their fire.

It was very poor sport when the forage ran short
First to eight and then six pounds a day,
But we managed to live on the blankets they brought,
Though blankets I now think, and always have thought,
Are but poor substitution for hay.

I remember a week when we played hide and seek
With the shrapnel the Boches sent over :
I remember the night when they pitied my plight,
And pipped me, and put me clean out of the fight
With a " Blighty "—then I was in clover.

For they dressed me and sent me quick out of the line
To a hospital down at the Base,
Where the standings were good and the weather was fine
And the rations were not a disgrace :
There, just within sound of the Heavies I found
La France can be quite a good place.

And now I've recovered—I'm weary and thin
And I'm out of condition and stale,
My ribs and my hips are too big for my skin
And I've left all the hair of my tail
On the middlemost bar of the paddock I'm in,
For they turned me out loose, as I'm frail.

Now the life in a paddock according to men
Is a sort of a beautiful song
Where animals wander around and can squander
The time as they wander along,
With nothing to worry them, nothing to do
Except for food intervals daily ; but you
Can take it from me they are wrong,
For paddocks are places conducive to thoughts
That settle unbid on the brain,
And often I find them to follow a kind
Of a minor-key tune or refrain
As I doze for an hour in the afternoon sun
Or I stand with my rump to the rain
I dream of the barn on my Illinois farm
And I *long* to be back there again.

—L. L. L. L., Base Indian Remount Depôt, B.E.F., France.

Mules in their paradise: liberty and freedom to roll.

CHAPTER VI

The Crossing Overseas

THEY passed out of the gate and away to France in threes. "Eyes right!" commanded the squadron leader as the files of threes came up to the Commanding Officer, and the man riding the near side horse did as ordered and looked high authority full in the face. The Colonel solemnly acknowledged the tribute of respect for the King's uniform, but his eyes were focussed on the horses, not on the man. For there was being enacted the last scene at the remount depôt in England, the depôt which has made so much horse history as a receiving and collecting station for all the horses and mules from the scattered training remount depôts throughout the United Kingdom. They were the animals destined for their important part in the war zones and they had come in as fit for overseas. Ostensibly they were fit, too, since both in theory and practice there should be unanimity as to what constitutes fitness. That unanimity does not always exist is another story. One can never account altogether for the part human nature, with its weaknesses and vanities, must play.

You must believe, therefore, that when the files of threes passed by the Colonel and out of the gate to their unknown destiny they were physically fitted for the ordeal of war so far as conscientious horse-masters and veterinary science could make them. Conscience, we may admit, is an elastic thing, and the few may approve, where fitness is concerned, of staring ribs and soft muscle, without being absolutely conscienceless. Honest endeavour and an ever-present thought for the welfare of those who will later make use of the horses and mules, and sometimes, perhaps, depend on their physical condition for the saving of their own lives and the lives of others, have surely been the guiding thought in approving of their final transfer from England to France, and thence to theatres beyond.

"Fifty light draught horses, twenty-five heavy draught horses, and twenty-five draught mules, all properly branded and shod, sir," says the squadron leader to the Commandant as he introduces his party for embarkation. So squadron follows squadron, and, as the files of threes lengthen, they make a long winding column which reaches far out on the way to where the big ships are. It is up to the Commandant now to legislate for the armies overseas. The onus is upon him if unfit animals are sent to those battery commanders, cavalry divisions, horse transport, and ammunition columns

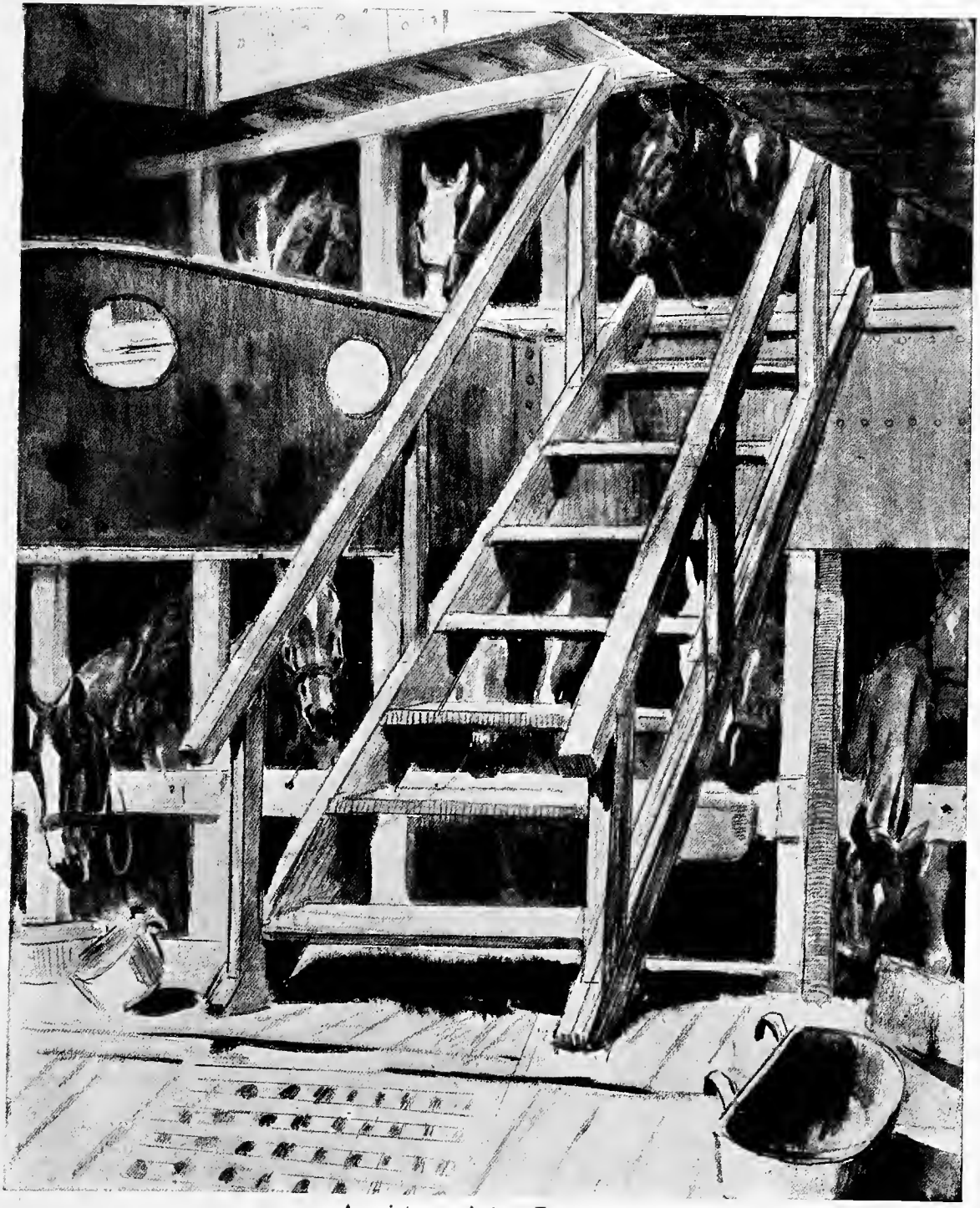
Top deck passengers. Interest in the hay ration.

so urgently needing fit ones. So it may be that now and then a peremptory order to " halt ! " breaks in on the slow march past, and the Colonel makes a closer inspection of a cumbersome heavy horse or a shuffling mule. He may be " tucked up," " split up," or rather " dried-up " looking—pretty expressions that mean something not quite compatible with fighting fitness. " Pull him out, and give him a little more time," observes the critic-in-chief, and the " heavy " goes back to the lines to stay awhile yet in Blighty. Some chargers go out, too, and many a thoroughbred has filed past this same spot to do credit to our incomparable breed. Cavalry horses may have their place in the procession, or their turn may be due on the morrow ; and if they have gone to France, they may also have gone further towards the rising sun. For the cavalry have accepted chances in the more distant theatres.

So the long line of three hundred or so has been completed, to be followed by another an hour later, and still another after that. With the conducting officer at the head, and each man mounted and leading two horses, they have made a move through the streets to the docks. Each horse has been provided with a canvas nosebag, for use, it may be, on the boat, certainly for use in France. How many tens of thousands, one wonders, have passed along those streets and have filed through those dock gates ? How many more will do so ? For four years now men, horses, and material have been steadily, hour after hour, day after day, hurried France-wards, through those same gates. To meet what fate ? People in those streets have long ceased to wonder at the almost daily processions. Familiarity strangely deadens interest. Once they stood to admire the noble outline of the heavy gun horse, and they marvelled at the numbers of field-gun and wagon horses, and the mules in their thousands from across the ocean. They wondered more and more where they could all come from, and how soon it would be before the reservoir had been drained dry. But the processions came up and went by almost day after day, and the people gave up wondering, as being useless and tiresome. Still they are coming and going.

They have finished their last journey on English soil now, and they are tied up in a great dock shed. They may share it with troops detraining and stores awaiting shipment. A skilled veterinary officer is making a final inspection prior to approving them for embarkation. A very few he keeps back. He detects a high temperature and the beginnings of respiratory trouble. The last three-mile walk has developed and made evident what had not been suspected until then. The animal thus attacked must wait for another day. So, also, must one which shows symptoms of skin irritation—anathema, indeed, and feared greatly for its devastating consequences if disregarded. And after these last necessary formalities have been observed they are ready for shipment.

" Mules first," is the order. That is because they are just mules. Outlaws of nature they may be in spite of their tremendous utility and value as aids to the carrying on of modern war, and so they are made to travel steerage as it were. They have to go " below stairs " in the stalls in the dark lower holds. To get there they must descend steep gangways from the main deck. Their descent is necessarily undignified, though, after all, could anything



A quiet crossing to France.

look undignified where no dignity attaches to an animal? The greatest admirer of mules—and who that has worked them in the Army does not admire them?—will not concede dignity to them. They are just mules. They would not be mules did they not show extraordinary shyness and distrust of the water troughs at which they are invited to drink before being led on board. They are thirsty and really want water, but they must think in their queer thinking machines that some one has poisoned the water, and so they will not yield to cajolery to drink. They believe all the world is against them, and they especially do so when they are reminded that they must not spend the rest of their lives looking at the gangway or "brow" before venturing along it from dock to ship. They do not snort or get excited as a horse does when he makes up his mind to "jib" and be unpleasant; they just push hard on their toes in the ground, and refuse to be led any further. Of course, they have to surrender, because there are ways and means, and the war has lasted long enough to convince our English muleteers that the obstreperous mule is not invincible and that a long rope with a breeching to haul on is the "high explosive" with which to gain victory.

In that way our long-eared friends are dragged across the threshold, and thereafter they go without more ado to their quarters below—stumbling, slipping, and sliding, but always avoiding falling. Thus to their quarters and close companionship for twenty-four hours or more. Next come the horses, with the heavy horses as near the top deck as possible, for they want fresh air; and, moreover, the shorter the time they occupy in getting on and off the ship the better. From now until they are landed at a port overseas and handed over to the care of base remount officers it is the duty of the conducting officer and his men to look after their welfare. That officer obviously has responsibility, but it is certainly lightened by the easy way his animals travel, even though the waters of the English Channel are often troubled and unruly.

He also takes certain wise precautions to lessen risks. He is not sparing of water, and he does not feed on hard corn, because he knows that a diet of oats could soon induce colic and other ills of a horse's digestive system. He wisely feeds on hay, and knows, too, that if horses are kept picking and eating slowly they will not get into mischief and be inclined to worry, kick, and bite each other. Then, when the day is drawing in and night comes on to cloak the wonders of the Naval Service and Admiralty transport across those perilous waters, he has the animals tied up short. In that way he reduces the chances of trouble should the crossing be bad.

All night long a strict vigil is kept by the conducting party. True, the horses are not resting, but they are not giving trouble. They are fidgety and nonplussed as if wondering what new, strange destiny awaits them. They do not settle as resignedly as do the perverse and illogical mules. The latter may have rebelled at embarking, but, once on board, they become the acme of good manners and immaculate behaviour. A ship's hold might have been their home from foalhood. They never heed the steady pulsating throb of the ship's engines. They could not know of the anxious vigil high up on the bridge, in the look-out on the foremast or on the gun platform, or of the sleeping troops covering all the space of the mess decks.

The transport safely docked. Keenness to land in France.

Have you ever thought, one wonders, of these four years of silent, dead-o'-night traffic from shore to shore of the English Channel during which hundreds of thousands of war-horses have been carried across in safety? of the Remount Service which has brought them together from a far distant land, and is now distributing them again into the battle arenas? Has the average Englishman given more than a passing thought to the wonderful organization of the Navy which has protected our transports on their ever risky errands? or of those gallant Captains Courageous and their splendid crews who have braved for all this time the lurking perils and navigated their ships from safety, through danger with the ever-present chance of disaster, to safety again?

Certainly the Remount Service is conscious of uninterrupted triumph over hidden foes, a triumph which the protecting escort of destroyers and careful navigation in face of extinguished lights have done everything to secure. When you have stood through the night by the side of a Captain Courageous you will have understood something of the nervous and mental strain borne night after night by those who have supported a great burden of responsibility. It is not a time for talk—just quiet deeds and orders given and executed in hushed tones; frequent glances by the Captain in the privacy of his chart-room at the course as laid down in secret Admiralty instructions, observations to port and starboard, and always the hiss of the bow waves as the ship hurries on at full pressure to beat the coming light of day. You can imagine in some small way the tension of the long looks ahead and abeam, and the always present anxiety to solve the mystery of the darkness. The escorts you know are there, frequently changing their guardian positions, and, when necessary, winking out messages of instruction and extra caution. The thought stiffens your courage and especially when the blessed wireless reads in those disquieting messages of "Government war warnings," of the presence on and under the waters of the vicious enemy. You know that every precaution to save ship and many lives is being taken. Again the thought is comforting. The night may seem long, though, sometimes, not long enough; for the first grey streaks of dawn are fast paling into another day before the ship is safe, where wind and wave are silent and where danger dares not follow. A little while more and the night's work and strain are over. The gallant destroyers have messaged a "good morning!" and are speeding on their return. The French pilot has been picked up and the ship comes to a brief rest again. That is how an instalment of our vast army of war-horses comes to France. They, like the men that stream in day after day, are only just coming to grips with the grim realities of active service.

CHAPTER VII

Base Remount Depôts in France—I

IF I say at the outset of this chapter that at the time of writing there are towards half a million horses and mules on active service with the British Forces in France, I may possibly excite the reader's doubt. Yet he must banish his doubt, for the figure would be on or near the mark were a census of war-horses and mules to be taken to-day. Then there are great numbers, which are ever growing with amazing rapidity, issued to the American Forces. Most of them have passed through the British Remount Service. That Service primarily exists to horse newly created war units, to repair wastage in war, and to receive and issue to fighting units and the many and varied units on Lines of Communication those sick and worn animals, now restored, that have passed through veterinary hospitals. Many of the vast total, which is creeping so near to the half-million, came out with the Forces—with artillery, light and heavy, cavalry, infantry, and all the various kinds of transport that follow in the wake of armies. So it happens that from the beginning of the war until 1918, well over a quarter of a million horses and mules came to France from overseas as remounts. With very few exceptions, say, about 5,000 " waler " horses from Australia and a few mules landed direct from America, the whole of these remounts were received from the United Kingdom. I have shown how most of these originally came from America and were made fit in the interval in the British depôts.

Omitting the small contingent from Australia, the whole of the remounts were landed at five base remount depôts situated at intervals along the north coast of France and within comparatively easy reach by train and road of our armies in the field. It follows, therefore, that it was part of the function of these base depôts to issue as directed those animals, as well as others that came to them again from veterinary hospitals and convalescent horse depôts, after having done work with the armies. Some of those " others " may have come from the front, *viâ* the hospitals, more than once, even twice or thrice. You will readily understand this when it is stated that up to the end of January last the issues to the front from the depôts were over half a million. Then in addition considerable numbers of horses and mules have been despatched to other theatres of war so that the total of animals that have passed out from base remount depôts from the beginning of the war to the middle of 1918

is well over the half-million. It is of those base depôts that I would like to write now, because, apart from their great importance, they obviously represent the starting-off point in the career of every gallant horse and worthy mule on active service.

It would seem an obvious thing in the well-ordered sequence of transit from the Remount Depôts of the United Kingdom to the advanced field sections, where the guns never cease their dread din and clamour, to start with the various Base Depôts in the North of France. From them the horse which was once, perhaps, helping to carve out the straight furrow amid surroundings undefiled by war, or was not long ago running half-wild on the grass plains of the Middle and Western States of America, really emerges into the stern realities of battle. We will certainly in due time keep company with him in his march nearer and nearer to the Line, and, when wearied and worn or wounded and scarred, follow him to those splendid hospitals and rest farms from which he eventually issues re-invigorated for more of the almost unbearable strain.

For the present, however, let us pass directly from the North to somewhere else in France. There also is a Base Remount Depôt, which in character is wholly unlike any other existing from a line a few miles west of Suez. It is the Base Indian Depôt. Its beginnings were on a modest scale, the personnel landing on November 25, 1914. At the outset there was a long period of marked activity and usefulness. Then it gradually lost its importance until it was on the point of flickering out altogether when circumstances arising out of events in the Near East and Northern Italy caused it to assume bigger proportions than ever before.

So, at the time of my visit, I found the establishment deeply interested in its re-birth. It was brimming over with activity and the hurly-burly of strenuous days. Makeshift had of necessity crept in to stem the torrent of increasingly incessant demands on space and personnel. Polish and " eye-wash " there was none. There was no time for either. Kraals for mules and long lines for horses had come up in a night as it were, and when day came there was much to do. Every day was an object lesson of " drive " and untiring restless energy.

One was bound to be impressed with the weird and odd contrasts after being used to orthodox Remount Depôts. I might, for instance, have looked for neat and well-ordered Squadrons,—lines of stabling, carefully-erected buildings, up-to-date feeding and watering arrangements, and pleasant enough surroundings such as are associated with all other Base Remount Depôts of my acquaintance. The contrasts, as I have said, were sharp, even vivid. Spread over a considerable acreage were spacious kraals or paddocks. They had that Indian bazaar-like suggestion of " makeshift," but, when a really big emergency comes and you successfully counter and overcome it, " makeshift " is a thing to be proud of. And so it is all to the credit of the officer-sahibs, the really admirable Indian officers, and those wonderful workers, the syces, that they have done such fine things in promptly carrying out the ideas and requirements of the Remount Directorate.

It cannot be too clearly understood what was demanded of the old

A scene in the Indian Base Remount Depôt in France. Horses exercising themselves around a "chukker."

concern. It was, as already explained, just about to flicker out of existence after having apparently fulfilled its original useful purpose. Space it had once covered had been taken over by the General Indian Base Authorities. All that and more had to be instantly re-claimed. Kraals for mules to run loose in, fencing for the same, watering and feeding, tents for the personnel, and a hundred other details essential to the working of a Remount camp had to be improvised. At the end of six months they may still be " carrying on " under certain difficulties and with deficiencies as regards the well-being of men and horses still to be made good. But the great thing is that there exists an ever-cheerful will to make the best of things as they happen to be, to never admit defeat, and to wait for the day when the Royal Engineers will have the labour available, and after that, the material, and after that again, the authority, passed on from Authority to Authority, to build and improve and make wholly efficient and sanitary a depôt which looks like continuing a vigorous existence until at last the " Cease Fire " sounds.

An ample ration and a splendid climate work wonders for the horses and mules. They thrive and " do " in a way which is altogether unknown in the north and on the English side of the Channel; for, in that sheltered valley amid the mountains that extend to the coast, biting winds and weeks on end of drab skies and chilling rain are unknown. Instead the sun more often than not streams out from lambent skies and kindles warmth and vigour and health in man and beast. Mules in particular do well when given the comparative freedom of the kraals or paddocks. A heavy rain may make deep mud in a night, but it is muscle making for the mule as he laboriously moves about. And as the average daily strength at one time was about the same as the biggest depôt in the whole of the Remount Service some horses of necessity have to be picketed on long lines. It must be their ultimate lot as they draw nearer to the real line, so that the necessity at the Base has quite a useful side to it.

Those with any knowledge of horse management in India know well enough how thoroughly capable and dependable are the *pukka* Indian syces and *sowars* of native cavalry. There they form the nucleus of the native establishment of workers, and one could not wish for better or more efficient workers. But it so happens that there are not sufficient of them, and the services are being utilized of those natives of India, who have been brought to France to take their place on the Lines of Communication and at the Front as R.F.A. drivers in Ammunition Columns. They may have been anything in India before being recruited and put into khaki, a view which is strengthened when you see them introduced for the first time to our army horses and mules. They seem at first so absolutely heart-breaking and hopeless as a Remount proposition, but they do—some do—make certain progress, and there can be no doubt that their shaping into R.F.A. drivers is assisted by the help they were called upon to give in the watering, feeding, and exercising of remounts. Mules, one noticed, had the utmost contempt for them. To see a native of this class stalking a mule in a kraal and the latter steadily and determinedly walking away is a sight to make you forget there's a war on.

You could not doubt that these " followers," drawn as they were from

First prize winners at a divisional horse show. These splendid horses were issued from a Remount Depôt, and were actually in action a week before this picture was taken.

New issues at a Remount Depôt. About to start for the Front.

all parts and castes of India, were happy, if happiness can be said to depend largely on the well-filled stomach. Certainly their rations are bountiful, since each man is entitled per day to 20 oz. of flour ; 2 oz. of dal or pulse ; 3 oz. of ghee (clarified butter) ; 3 oz. of sugar or goor (Indian molasses) ; ½ oz. of spices ; 8 oz of vegetables ; 2 lb. of wood or coal ; 1 oz. of condensed milk ; and, in the case of non-meat eaters, 7 oz.—the Jats, for instance, do not eat meat—½ an oz. of tea ; and 8 oz. of meat to the meat eaters. Live sheep and goats are issued to the native butchers, the Sikhs slaughtering with one blow of a sword or tulwar, and the Mohammedans by cutting the throat, at the same time saying a prayer.

It was after all a pleasure and an instruction to see, so far west of the Nile, this unique Remount Camp. It represented the harnessing of the forces of West and East in an eminently successful degree ; and when the war is a thing of the past it will be interesting to recall the days when this particular spot in the South of France was a scene of great activity. One will remember the perfect setting in the valley of vineyards, and the panoramic glories of the guardian mountains, their peaks showing clear and defined through vague and fleecy wreaths of morning mist. There will be memories of the Indian bazaar, the sharp ejaculatory cries in Hindustani tongues, the babble of the *syces*, the cooks, the *bhisties*, and the sweepers, and at all times the faint sickly smell of the burning ghee. Outlasting all will be the link it

represents in the quick-moving chain of British strength beyond the seas, the part it played in aiding the capture of Jerusalem and the stemming of the Austro-German hosts on the plains of Northern Italy.

Now let us return again to the North. A base remount depôt, which we will call " A," has, of course, easy access from the sea. From the spot where it is situated you look towards an historical city, through which a river famous in commerce, romance and tragedy, passes out on its ever-widening passage to the sea. You contemplate that vista of ancient monuments mingling with the tall chimneys of modern industry, and your imagination flits centuries back to the distant ages when the Norsemen came, when English and French fought as fierce opponents, asking and giving no quarter, and when treachery, bloodshed, and swaying battles were part of the unhappy lives of each succeeding generation. Odd contrasts indeed! This depôt may be said to have had its origin half in York and half in Waterford, the divided forces becoming united at their first French base on August 19, 1914. They were there only a fortnight, and then at a time when the Germans were

Watering at a base Remount Depôt in France.

seriously threatening the northern coast of France they were hurriedly shipped and put out to sea. For three days they were steaming for a destination unknown to the voyagers until they again landed in France. For three weeks afterwards they were strenuously engaged in supplying horses to the front, including most of the thousand brought from Waterford. Then there came the order to move. Another fortnight passed and eventually the depôt came to rest at the place it has ever since occupied. They were the first to settle in what was then a fine stretch of parkland on the edge of a forest. You can imagine that with the huge growth of the armies and their requirements little or nothing that is green is to be seen on the surface of that park to-day, for hospitals, stores, rest camps, and odds and ends of necessary military development abound and congest.

The depôt began, as all other remount depôts began—on nothing! All they possessed were the things that mattered, the horses. No neat and orderly lines of covered stables, no well made metalled roads, no well designed feeding and watering arrangements, and little or no comfort and convenience for man or beast existed as is the case to-day. Horses were picketed in lines on ropes. They had to stand on ground which rapidly became mud. They had to be taken a mile or more to water. All these alarming deficiencies and disadvantages only existed, however, to be gradually removed until, by strenuous labour and real devotion to the Cause, order was evolved out of chaos.

To-day there are five squadrons, each capable in normal times of dealing with 500 animals. Often at times of pressure far more are dealt with, so that the strength in horses and mules averages 3,000. Thus, one squadron will deal only with heavy draught horses for heavy artillery and that class of transport which must have heavy horses; another specializes in the light draught horse which horses the Field and Horse Artillery and all manner of horse transport. You scarcely need to be told, therefore, how this class of horse must preponderate. A third squadron is intended to handle those riding-horses suitable for cavalry and yeomanry, and a fourth devotes each and every day's work to the charger.

Two-thirds of the animals come from those veterinary hospitals in the immediate neighbourhood, and, on an average, close on a hundred a day are received in this way. The remaining third come directly off the ships which arrive at regular intervals from the large issuing depôt in England. You will notice, therefore, how details as to supply and demand are made to dovetail. I have watched horses coming off ships after their short voyage, and I have seen the daily arrivals from the veterinary hospitals. Obviously, they are supposed to be fit animals whose residence at the base should, theoretically, be of short duration. For the time being, however, they are at once placed in their classes and different squadrons by a special classification officer, and it depends then on the calls made by the deputy directors of remounts with the different armies as to how long they will stay at the base. It is the D.D.R.'s, as they are called, who make the demands for the front. The depôt of which I am writing is primarily responsible for supplying the cavalry divisions as well as the majority of chargers for the officers of those divisions.

If you would better appreciate the work it has done under its past and present commandants, let me mention that up to the end of 1917 over 50,000 animals had been received from the United Kingdom since the formation of the depôt. That total has been much swollen since then.

CHAPTER VIII

Base Remount Depôts in France—II

AT the mouth of a famous estuary is a second base remount depôt which we will call "B." Here, too, is extremely well ordered and organized accommodation for 3,000 animals. Often there are more, and it must be said to the credit of this depôt that they have had a great deal to do, for they receive more animals from overseas than any other depôt. It is their function, too, to receive the cured animals from neighbouring veterinary hospitals and to send trainloads to the front, and one cannot doubt, therefore, that their day's work is crowded in every sense. Its marked activity will be better understood when it is stated that at the time of writing nearly 200,000 animals had been received and issued.

Next there is the base depôt, called "C" for the purposes of this narrative. It is certainly not the least interesting and well arranged of the quintet, and as an example of what a unit of its kind should be it is hard to beat. Its existence may be said to date from January 29, 1915, when the 17th Remount Squadron arrived from Woolwich. At first the selected site was four miles from the well-known port at which the horses disembarked, but the disadvantages soon became apparent, and accordingly about two months later a move was made to the present admirable location. It, too, stands on high land, and as the horses are well sheltered from keen winds they "do" remarkably well, as is shown by the low figure of sickness. What causes horses and mules on active service to go wrong quicker than anything else—to contract mud-borne diseases, debility, and general loss of mobility—are bad standings and no shelter from piercing winds. Give them the shelter of any primitively rigged screen and some dry ground to stand on and they will endure rain and cold and other unpleasant weather. If they cannot have some comfort at the base depôts they will have small chance "higher up." I need hardly say that consideration of the kind is most certainly forthcoming; indeed, in this respect the horse is better cared for than in England before shipment overseas.

This "C" base depôt has a strength of six squadrons, five adjoining each other, and the sixth a couple of miles away and under the command of an officer who bears the name of one who was very famous indeed in polo. He is essentially a horse-master, and it is his business, assisted by his small staff, to receive those animals from convalescent horse depôts and get them fit for

Remounts trekking from a base depôt to a division at the Front.

A winter's scene on the road to the Front. Waiting for water.

issue up the line. In this way he may have anything from 500 to 700 animals under his care, farm buildings, as well as covered lines, being utilized for stabling; while, when the grass is growing in the spring and the summer, the poorer animals are given their absolute freedom and the reinvigorating feed. In the summer months, too, it is the custom of this squadron leader to swim his horses in the sea close by. I mention these details because they will show the care, thought, and enterprise of those who are giving all their life-long experience and enthusiasm towards bringing the war-horse back to health and maintaining him at the maximum of his strength and usefulness. I will just add, in reference to " C " depôt as a whole, that since its establishment to the end of 1917 well over 100,000 animals had been received and issued, the average per day of those coming from the veterinary hospitals in the vicinity being 48, while, of course, the arrivals from overseas week after week were substantial.

Passing along the coast there is, appropriately handy to a port, a fourth base depôt. It has its own particular designation for Army purposes, but it is politic that we should know it in print as " D." Its strength is considerable, running to six squadrons, but you will perhaps better understand its size and the activity of those associated with it if I say that it deals with an average from day to day of between 3,000 and 4,000 animals. Like those others I have described, it receives many horses and mules from England, the routine being for an officer and a party of men to be at the docks in readiness for the transport berthing. When once alongside and the " brows " fixed it is a

matter of only a few minutes for a few hundred horses to be disembarked. They stream off loose in Indian file, each animal being taken by a waiting man as it steps off the " brow " on shore. Then, when all are ashore and numbers checked, they are given the order to march off, and so they thread their way through mazes of coloured labour and locomotion in the docks out into a town bristling with khaki and activity and away to the base depôt.

Quite pertinently it may be asked what is the order of daily work at a depôt such as I am referring to. Obviously, the main thing is to maintain animals for war at the highest possible standard of robust health, and in order to do so it is equally clear that exercise and cleanliness are vitally essential. No one realizes this more acutely than those responsible for the direction of the Remount Service. Where horses are congregated in large numbers and where they have been so collected for a long time together, the tendency is to make them more susceptible to disease. The ground has been fouled in spite of the greatest care and, therefore, in order to combat such tendencies the horse-masters of the Remount Service have set exercise and cleanliness before all else. Moreover, until animals are called for, which they may be at any moment, their muscles must not be allowed to relax, but rather to develop and harden from healthy work either in transport or on those ingenious long ropes which have gone far to solve the exercising of remounts with the

A summer's scene off the road. Grooming healthy and contented mules.

minimum of labour, or on the roads in the vicinity of depôts. You must understand that the depôts of which I am writing are not primarily intended to get horses fit except those recovering from debility and exhaustion and which are the output of convalescent horse depôts. They are for maintaining the mobility of artillery, transport and cavalry ; the point being that the fit horses must be exercised just as the unfit ones must be given lighter work according to the discretion of the squadron leader. Exercise and grooming, therefore, are essential to each day's work, almost as essential, indeed, as watering and feeding. Needless to say, the latter are matters for the greatest concern and vigilance. The remount officer at the base who studies the individual horse or groups his squadron for special purposes in feeding must inevitably show the best results. They are details which crowd into the day's work ; but when, apart from that, you have the big business of receiving from the group of veterinary hospitals near by and the issuing of fit horses to the front—these things being of daily occurrence—it will be understood what a responsible link the base remount depôts in France are in the whole story of the war-horse. This " D " depôt makes all its issues to the front by road, and it is characteristic of the commandant's administration that he personally sees every animal received and issued. Units with divisions at the front send parties for the horses allotted to them, and so they are marched away, probably reaching their destination after a two days' march. It also feeds " C " base remount depôt, an admirable unit also, which in turn does its share in maintaining the tremendous establishment of horses immediately behind the line and on the Lines of Communication. The figures relating to the activities of " D " show that since 1914 over 150,000 animals have been received and issued. " C " depôt, which may be said to be nearer the northern part of the line than any other, had, from June, 1915, to December, 1917, received and issued nearly 100,000 animals.

It is extremely difficult to compress into a single chapter all that happens in the long day's work and goes to the credit of these base remount depôts in France. They are not carried on without a show of real ability, zeal and keenness to overcome worries and minor troubles. The men are well off because they have not to share the burdens and perils of those whose job it is to hold the long line ; but it is because they are a long remove from the necessary physical fitness. They may not all be up to the handling of horses and mules, and there are not many of them, but depôt commandants and their officers pull through, the best evidence of their success being the excellent results they show.

Just a few more words about those remount rest farms, the success of which the remount directorate in France is justifiably proud. They are situated in the finest grass country in this part of France, a long way behind the line, and yet not too far away from at least three of the base remount depôts. It was, in the old days of peace, a great country for cheese-making and cattle, and therefore its ideal qualities for receiving weary, thin and exhausted horses will be well understood. The Creator did not create horses to stand in stables and be fed therein. He made them to live in the open, in the wind, rain and sun, and to feed on the herbage of the fields. So the

tonic effect of the rest in the quietude of these fields in Normandy is wonderful where debilitated remounts are concerned, and also in a larger degree as regards the convalescents from veterinary hospitals. To them I shall allude in due course when dealing with the great work in France of the Army Veterinary Service. For the moment I have in mind two notable remount farms, each under an untiring and enthusiastic major. Each will have 1,200 horses under supervision, and as they grow healthy and big and bright-eyed in the fields they are brought in to the stabling, where, assisted in no mean measure by German prisoner labour, they are got fit and hard again for their war work. It is certainly interesting to state that the first of these rest farms —which can be referred to as " No. 4 " Advanced Remount Depôt—received and issued roundly 20,000, while " No. 5 " received and issued a slightly smaller number. Those are wonderful figures for " mere farms."

Two days' march away there is an advance remount depôt commanded at that time by a gallant major whose only aim in life seems to be to enjoy the maximum of work and the minimum of sleep. His stabling is chiefly in the old beet store sheds of a sugar factory, and he has to work hard because the average strength of the squadron is 700 animals, constantly coming and going to all manner of units. And the great measure of his success is shown by these illuminating figures up to the end of 1917 : received and issued, some 75,000 animals.

But I am drawing nearer to the line, and that interesting part of my subject must be left for another chapter.

CHAPTER IX

On Active Service

EVERY one in the Army has been learning and acquiring knowledge during the war. Brains, when they were given a chance, have had wonderful opportunities for activity; and even when suppressed by the sheer complexity and weight of official routine they have invariably triumphed. It is true of the Chiefs of strategy, tactics, administration and supply and of every one in a descending grade. Most certainly it is true of those who have had to do with horses and mules in the war, which are my special theme. Experience has been the teacher, as it always has been, whether in success or failure. Every one must inevitably have profited by his mistakes, just as he must have been encouraged and spurred on to greater things by his successes. One sees this so definitely where the horses are concerned. There is an infinitely better understanding in 1918 between man and his dumb and uncomplaining beast of burden in France than there was in 1914 and later than that. Those who have had charge of him in health have learned better how to maintain him in health against the unnatural rigours of hardship and exposure and those other menaces imposed by modern warfare in country constantly harassed and torn by shell-fire and bomb. And it is equally certain that immense strides have been made by that splendid Army Veterinary Service in coaxing back to health the debilitated and the exhausted, those gashed and wounded by bullet and shell splinters, and in combating disease generally.

There can be no fair comparison between 1914 and 1918. For one thing, numbers have vastly increased; so much so, indeed, that since the first of our war-horses stepped ashore in France something like a total of three-quarters of a million animals must have passed through France. That is a stupendous figure. Then, while the " first hundred thousand " had to be dumped " anywhere "—literally anywhere—in the region of the long line of battle, others that followed have had the better conditions resulting from valiant efforts to improve stabling and shelters. Time and experience have come to the rescue, just as one would have expected them to do. But a factor of which too much cannot be made has been the very real concern of the Field-Marshal Commanding-in-Chief (Sir Douglas Haig).

His influence has been great and has penetrated from the vast users of animals—the heavy and field artillery—to the smallest unit employing horses or mules. He is known to be a sincere lover of the horse, and I am perfectly

Crossing the Yser. Entering the battle zone.

sure that the Quartermaster-General of the Forces (who is primarily responsible for the feeding of our war-horses), the Director of Remounts at the War Office (who is responsible for meeting the demands of the armies in France and all the theatres of war), and the Director of the Veterinary Service in France will bear eloquent testimony to the incalculable good which is the outcome of the " Chief's " personal interest.

That is why I say there can be no fair comparison between then and now. I will go further and congratulate myself that I am writing in 1918, and not twelve months earlier ; for one must have been depressed at that time by the heavy wastage caused by the extraordinarily hard winter of 1916–17. First, there were weeks on end of rain, then weeks of rigorous cold and icy winds, and then rain again with the thaw. The greatest care could not overcome the evils that followed on those dreadful conditions. Flanders and the Somme country are appalling areas in such circumstances. The mud was awful and literally engulfed horses. There were parts where wheeled traffic could not go, and yet supplies had to be got to their objectives and the guns moved as directed. So loads had to be carried as packs, and, in this way weighed down, our war-horses and mules were pulled to pieces. Added to this was a serious curtailment of the oat ration, which could not possibly have been avoided, since it was due to a circumstance beyond the control of our splendid organizers of supply. Thus it was that the combined result of operations in mud and short rations was to cause a wastage which, happily, belongs to the past, and will, we hope, never occur again. In one month the losses rose to 5 per cent., which is little under half the wastage of the whole of the previous year. Matters speedily improved when the better weather came and the full ration was restored, and animals were wonderful in the vast improvement they showed. Most probably, the loss of their proper food was more harmful than the frightful weather.

It was about this time that the Commander-in-Chief showed his watchfulness and zeal for the welfare of his horses ; and one outcome, which I feel sure has had most excellent results, was the appointment to each corps of a chief horse master, who had under him subordinate horse-masters, each attached to minor units. They were ostensibly what their designation implies—experts in horse and stable management ; and it has been their duty ever since to watch those units employing horses and to give useful advice for the improvement of the necessarily hard lot of horses and mules on active service close behind the Line. Really efficient and tactful horse-masters have, I am sure, done good, though the splendid condition of the animals in France to-day has been primarily due to the better and milder winter. Then, the Director of the Veterinary Service in France has abundantly aided the good work by instituting at each of his hospitals a ten-day course of lectures and instruction for artillery and infantry transport officers. In this way 50 officers and 300 N.C.O.'s have taken the course each month.

There was a time in the early days of the war when the horse knowledge of such officers was more imaginary than real. For instance, an able and genial Assistant Director of the Veterinary Service, who was working in a particularly unhealthy part of the long Line, told me a true story which amply

The phlegmatic mule is impervious to adjacent shell bursts, and just plods steadily on.

illustrates with a saving grace of humour the square peg in the round hole. In the course of his visits a young infantry transport officer—such an officer may have about fifty animals in his care—complained of the poor quality of the oats. "What's the matter with the oats?" inquired the A.D.V.S. "Well, sir," was the reply, "they are so small; they get into the horses' teeth." "Ah, well, that's bad, very bad. Perhaps you'd better indent on 'Dados' [a person who is known officially as the Deputy Assistant Director of Ordnance Supply] for some toothpicks"! Of course, the zealous transport officer meant well. But the best part of the story is that a day or two later the boy was ordered to replace a casualty in the line, and the first time he went over the top he won the Military Cross. Clearly it was a case of a square peg having been in the round hole.

Then, again, this same A.D.V.S. was giving instruction to a class of officers who were concerned with horses in the field, and one enterprising member of the class volunteered the information that he thought he knew all there was to know. He had, for instance, carefully read Horace Hayes' "Notes on Horse Management" and Fitzwygram's well-known book on "Horses and Stables." "Then," observed the A.D.V.S., "I suppose you can tell me how many bones there are in a horse's foot." "There are three," promptly came the reply. The interrogator was naturally rather startled, and he had to investigate deeper and inquire the identity of the three. Our gallant officer obliged at once. "They are," he said, "ringbone, sidebone and navicular"! He was not discharged the class that day.

I mention these quite true stories, not in an unpleasant way, but in order to show that all associated with horses in health and sickness must constantly be learning and improving their usefulness to the betterment of the animals themselves, and that the wisest among us may still go on learning.

It will, I think, be interesting at this stage to outline the procedure by which remounts are sent from the base depôts to the front. Remounts are those horses and mules which repair the day-to-day wastage, and so maintain the armies, where animals are concerned, at their allotted strength. In a previous chapter it was pointed out how, since the war began, over a quarter of a million remounts had been received in France from the beginning of the war to the end of 1917. It will be understood how that total has greatly increased since, especially since the advent of the American hosts. Those figures convey in the best possible way the vast extent of this important branch of the Service. It is, of course, a part of the enormous Department of Supply in the charge of the Quartermaster-General of the Forces. In France there is a Remount Directorate, at the head of which is Brigadier-General Sir F. S. Garratt, C.B., K.C.M.G., and its marked efficiency in every respect is shown by the able way animals have unfailingly been supplied to all those combatant and non-combatant units which have to make use of them in the proper prosecution of the war. With each army there is a Deputy Director of Remounts, and he is "indented on"—the word is a military one, and it is therefore the proper one to use—by every brigade, division and corps in his particular army area. The demands are tabulated, and after authentication he applies to the Directorate at their headquarters for

so many heavy draught horses, light draught horses and mules, chargers, riders other than chargers, and pack animals. According to the proximity of the Army and the whereabouts of the nearest base remount depôt the orders are given. Thus an army holding the northern part of the line would naturally be supplied by a depôt or depôts situated nearest to it.

At one time it was the rule to have horses so ordered dispatched by special train, each in charge of a conducting officer, who would be responsible for

An old trench will make a capital stable when the sun shines.

proper watering and feeding *en route* and the safe delivery of them to the Deputy Director at railhead. This procedure in certain cases is still followed, but whenever possible the animals are now marched by road and by stages to their destination. The advantages are distinct. Rolling stock on the railways is thereby spared for other urgent needs, while the steady march is good for the animals themselves. It is good for them physically, for when they arrive they must be better rather than worse for the road work they have

done. And, moreover, the units to receive them make acquaintance with them at the base, since a special party is detailed to proceed from their positions at the front to bring them up.

It follows, of course, that they have been passed fit for their ordeal. The Commanding Officer of the depôt has done his part conscientiously and with strict regard to what will be required of them. My experience goes to show that there is perhaps greater strictness shown in France than in the United Kingdom. It is quite right that the supervision in this way should touch the highest possible standard, since it would be grossly unfair and wrong to a degree to send indifferent animals to those who are fighting in the death zone and who must at times rely on the activity and strength of their horses for their own personal safety. So, also, it is with the veterinary officers. A heavy responsibility lies with them, for to allow anything but the absolutely fit in health to proceed to the front must be to choke the sick lines with units and the advanced mobile veterinary sections. Besides, neglect in this respect does not give the horse a chance. But I am happy to say, as the result of close observation, that every officer in France in the Remount and Veterinary Services is keenly sensible of this point, and that he never consciously allows an animal to go to the front either too soon or too late.

On all the roads that lead to the line there are staging camps where men and horses are rested for the night. The journey may be of two or three days ; usually only two days. Good water is handy, and our wonderful Q.M.G.'s Department has ensured rations being in readiness. They never fail to be there. And so they progress to the last receiving place, where they are met by the Deputy Director of Remounts attached to the Army Headquarters concerned, and forthwith distributed throughout the area. Their life, doings and welfare can best be told in another chapter. We are within sound of the guns now.

CHAPTER X

Work at the Front

IT is one thing seeing a horse or mule at the front—or shall I say, just at the back of the front?—in the bloom of good health, and quite another seeing him away down the Lines of Communication in the horse hospitals after he has "cracked up" on actice service. The one is at his full strength, and the horse lover must feel heartened as he sees him pulling and hauling and contentedly plodding along war's way while still retaining the grit and stamina to do so. The other, which has begun to fail, is sick and sorry now. The machinery which has kept him keyed up as a category "A" individual runs down with a suddenness which is incredible when once he has started to go the wrong way. He passes into sympathetic management and restful quarters, and in due course we will follow his career during this phase of temporary eclipse. For the present let us keep company with the war-horse or mule which is doing his bit, for the healthy are as in the proportion of 9 to 1 to the sick.

Not long ago I asked a highly-placed general officer whose business it is to know all about our animals in the war what impressed him most about the horses and mules at work in France, and he unhesitatingly replied: "Their good condition." Well, you have to see to believe, and I can honestly say that I did not see a single really unfit horse. A very few were probably showing signs of the daily grind and might have been qualifying for a rest and special feeding at the base hospitals or convalescent horse depôts, but I did not see a case of debility or exhaustion still being retained at the front. And, of course, I saw many thousands of animals.

Why this should be so is still something of a mystery to me. You will pass divisions either coming out of the line for rest or others going up. They seemed to be miles long as the guns, limbers, and transport rumbled and rattled over the pavé or newly-metalled roads. Without an exception their animals were wonderfully good, and sometimes I thought the mules were better than the horses, and then I would incline to favour the horses rather than the mules. I visited here and there, and quite unannounced, horse-standings of some divisional ammunition column, Royal Field Artillery horses, heavy battery horses, and so on. Some were within shelters just off the roadside, others were among the ruins of a shell-blasted village. I looked first for thin and debilitated horses like some of the wrecks I had made

acquaintance with away down the line at the hospitals. I asked for them when I could not find them, and was told that they did not exist. From where, then, did the hospitals get their debility cases? I can only infer that the authorities concerned do realize that prompt evacuation of the sick and the worn is the best policy, and that to hang on to them at the front too long is to jeopardize the life of the horse or to delay his complete recovery so long that his maintenance while out of action becomes a doubtful proposition from a financial point of view.

Again I would emphasize what I wrote in a previous article, namely, that gunner officers, infantry transport officers, D.A.C. officers, and the N.C.O.'s working under them have undoubtedly acquired from experience a far better understanding of certain first principles essential to proper management of horses in the field. The excellent results are what I saw. The horse advisers have obviously done well, and in that sense the experiment of establishing them has been proved a success, even though it is true that here and there intrusion was not exactly welcomed at the outset. And, of very real importance, I would specially note once more the great good following on the improved standings and the provision of shelter and screens, however rough, against wind and weather. It follows that a horse which must stand in mud and slime until his fetlocks disappear is not going to remain well long. He will develop foot trouble like laminitis, and "grease," the scourge of heavy, hairy-legged horses, is inevitable and must, indeed, cause great loss of usefulness. So you will understand what an advance has been made by the improvement of standings and how it has reacted on the animals.

Of course, it is not always possible to provide what every man knows is desirable. Supposing an advance takes place to a depth of a mile or two, or even more, what then? Horses attached to the guns, horses in the transport with supplies, pack mules with food and ammunition for the infantry—they cannot remain where they were. They must make a corresponding move on, and then, of course, they have to desert their old shelters and enter a "No Man's Land." Such a land too! A land of horrors underfoot, the whole drab face of the earth nothing now but a racked and scourged wilderness of shuddering pits and water-laden shell holes. Then is the time when the stoutest-hearted horse and the plodding, uncomplaining "muley" are tried to "cracking point." Their next bivouac is on the mud, which is the beginning of most troubles and the original cause of the streams that trickle week by week into the reception veterinary hospitals and those other hospitals that radiate from them.

I have heard folk at home, who have never seen these things and therefore do not know, express astonishment that horses and mules are still a vital force in the prosecution of modern warfare. The motor lorry, the steam wagon and the caterpillar tractors, they say, must have supplanted the horse. To some extent they certainly have done so, and it is a reminder that but for them no nation or assembly of nations could have carried on war on the gigantic scale it now is had they all the horses in the world at their command. We have to remember that this is a unique war of enormous, unparalleled magnitude, and that horses are being employed on a scale which could never have

Cavalry in movement. Passing round a huge mine crater.

been dreamed of. They must still continue to do what motors cannot do until the time comes when war will be made wholly in the sky and under the earth.

In a previous chapter it was mentioned that at the time of writing there were in the neighbourhood of half a million horses and mules engaged with the British armies in France. In the month of February there were just on 100,000 with the particular army I visited—approximately three horses to one mule. At one time there were with this army about 150,000 animals, every one being urgently required; but I need scarcely point out that any fluctuations must be a matter of adjustment of the Higher Command according to the general situation. Let me try and convey to the reader some idea of what the 100,000 were doing. First and foremost, the roads by day were a revelation. They were a revelation in the splendid control of the traffic, in the distinction made between fast and slow moving vehicles proceeding in the same direction.

Take the Field Artillery proceeding up the line in relief, or, perhaps, coming out for rest and a clean-up, or movement elsewhere. There were the 18-pounder guns, the 60-pounder guns, a siege battery of still heavier guns of the "How" description, and with them all, their limbers and transport; light draught horses, mostly of American origin of that greatly admired Percheron-graded stamp—the stamp that has proved his excellence as a war-horse in France over and over again—were in the lighter field gun, or there were teams of mules, pulling stoically and philosophically at their own gait as if nothing else in the world mattered. There were heavier Percheron-bred teams from the United States in the heavier guns, all in clean and hard condition, and then, perhaps, variety would be given to the long unending procession by the appearance on the scene of some howitzers of certain calibre, each with a team of ten heavy draught horses. A big gun of the kind would require more horses to move it in rough ground, but ten amply sufficed along the level, well-laid roads behind this part of the line.

And what else depends for their movement on horse and mule haulage in the vast scheme of war-making as it is to-day? A divisional train would come along made up of General Service wagons, limbered wagons with heavy or light draught horses or mules, playing their part. An infantry transport might be bringing up the rear of a battalion on the march, and you would notice its wagons, its travelling kitchens smoking and emitting the savoury odours of the coming meal, its water-carts, and its pack animals. Or, again, a machine gun company's transport of limbered wagons is on the move, and still another unit you recognize as the cable section of a signalling company. So all day and every day movement and push and drive go on, passing in different ways, like a limitless frieze, but all intent on arriving at the same objective—the winning of the war.

Think, therefore, how much depends on the hundreds of thousands of equine helpers and the necessity of keeping them in health and strength. Most of them had still on their long winter coats, some were partially clipped, a few only were fully clipped; for there is a strong belief now among those who should know that the most complete clipping of war-horses and mules

Pack horses carrying ammunition can go where wheeled traffic could not pass.
A reminder of winter's mud in Flanders and in the Somme Valley.

Heavy draught horses bringing up reinforcements.

at the beginning of winter is both a folly and a cruelty, since it must deprive them of the warmth provided by Nature. They do say that the losses of the winter and spring 1916–17 were assisted by the clipping which was general, and the laws of logic and nature would seem to confirm the theory. But it is a point on which the expert and the veterinary specialists do not quite agree, and therefore there has been something of a compromise during the 1917-18 winter with certainly vastly improved results. The point made by the Veterinary Service, however, is quite intelligible. They say that the growing of a long coat hides mange and other serious skin troubles until it is too late, when eventually detected, to effect a speedy cure. Remount officers and others say that total clipping must cause great wastage from debility and death, and that it is better to clip, if at all, in the late autumn or very early winter. I am sure the veterinary officers agree that it is undesirable to deprive animals of their winter coats. It therefore becomes a question of arriving at the lesser of two evils, and I am sure the compromise of the fourth winter of war has been the right and sane one.

. . . . . .

The voices of the guns, which some miles back were but a murmur borne on the light wind of this late winter's day, had hardened into menace and hateful insistency as one drew nearer to what is so lightly and yet so significantly alluded to as " the line." At disjointed intervals the " heavies " were sending their screaming messengers of death away into the haze of the grey distance when one " quiet " day I looked in on some animals whose quarters were actually closest to our line. Here I saw field artillery horses in waiting ; further away were the horses of a heavy battery ; and then there were the horses of a D.A.C. section to see.

Here were examples of the horse shelters dotted all over the devastated country, and I need scarcely add that they were within the range of Boche gun fire. But they have what advantages of immunity can be derived from *camouflage*, while the men tending them live in huts similarly guarded or in dug-outs. Enemy visitations at night from the air are not unexpected ; but when our men think of danger in that way they have also the comforting knowledge that our brave boys in the air are " strafing " and doing as much and more o' nights behind the enemy lines.

And the war-horse and his ever constant associate, the mule, just go on living their lives as unconcernedly as if the country were not scarred and burned so that its appearance is ugly, sinister and repulsive. They cannot discriminate between a village which is dust and ruin and a church which was once a monument to civilization and Christianity and is now but a skeleton of tottering walls standing in mute condemnation of human hate and savagery, and a village and church which stand whole and beautiful in the pale sun of this winter's day. Our dumb helpers may live in the ghastly ruins of what was once a prosperous town, where the cries of little children at play mingled with the peaceful work-o'-day lives of their elders. Death and devastation made it a hell, the awful fires of which have not yet flickered out.

So when you go out beyond and survey the duck-board tracks which lead

to where our men are bearing the real burden and dangers of war, you think of our war beasts of burden that night after night traverse that foul and shell-torn country amid the loathsome vapours of the guns in performing their share in " carrying on." Can you wonder that there is real affection for the horse and mule, and that they are indeed the friends of man at this tremendous crisis ?

CHAPTER XI

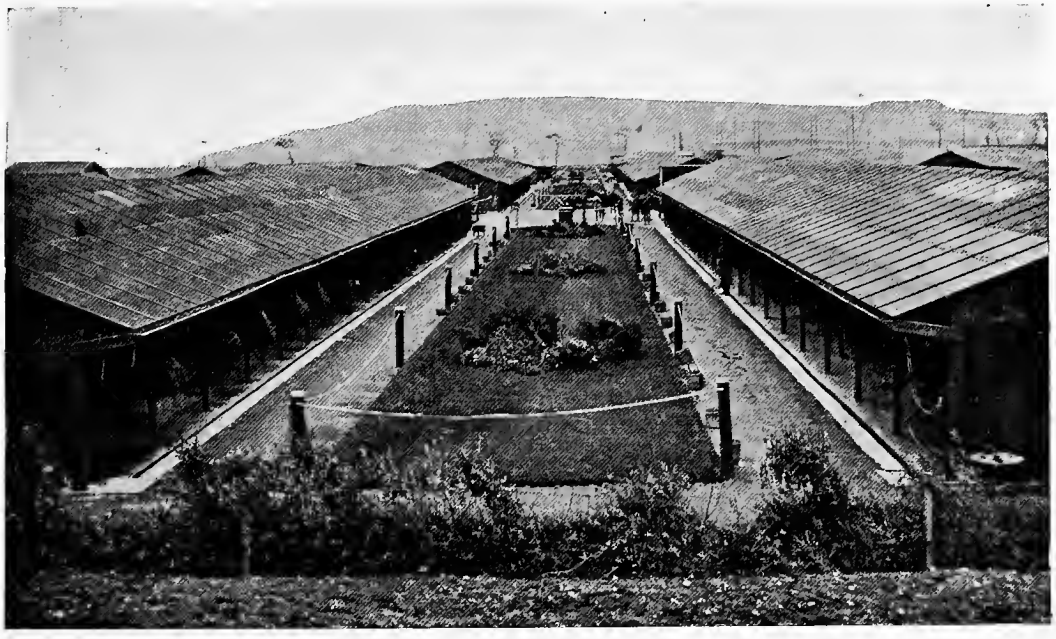
Triumphs of the Army Veterinary Service

THE story of the doings of our war-horses and mules on active service in France would only be half told were it to be brought to an end with their work and welfare at the front and along the lines of communication. So far as this narrative has gone it has been wholly concerned with their progress and doings from the time they are embarked in England to the day when they come to be an active and essential piece of the vast machinery which is making war. Their reception at the base remount depôts in France has been described and, later, their issue to those fighting and non-fighting units which must make use of horses and mules in order to secure their proper mobility and usefulness. Obviously, therefore, we have been discussing our friends in the full possession of their health and strength. There comes a time when they succumb to the rigours and dangers of modern warfare. Some of them must fall sick and war-weary and so are no longer "serviceable"—to use a military expression—and when that happens they become the patients of the Army Veterinary Corps. When I remind the reader that in the spring of 1918 there were over 30,000 horses and mules in veterinary hospitals and convalescent horse depôts, it will be understood what a large part is being enacted from day to day by this very efficient branch of the Service.

I am writing at the moment of France only. In every theatre of war where British armies are fighting, the A.V.C. is worthily maintaining and steadily improving its standards. In dealing with this progress I may seem to write with enthusiasm, but I would like to make it clear from the outset that my impressions were gained at first hand and after some lengthy study of the Veterinary Service in France—of its personnel, its institutions, its methods, and its whole-hearted devotion to the daily task of restoring the horse from disease and exhaustion to health and strength. If our military organization and administration have triumphed in many other directions, they most certainly have in this particular one. The public have no conception of their splendid achievements, and it is due to them, equally as it is due to those who have been toiling through the months and years so assiduously, always learning something new and useful, and always profiting by their lessons, that the story should be told.

Beyond all doubt it has been a great war for the Veterinary Service.

Horses being treated for mange in gas chambers with only their heads exposed.



A glimpse of a Veterinary Hospital in France.

What it has had to tackle has been but a part of the products of savagery and the common devastation of war, but the progress would not have been so marked had it not been so. Efficiency has marched with the accumulation of problems and every new anxiety. It is well for our Army and for our cause that this is so. One wonders what would have happened had the Service been beaten by those nefarious and scourging diseases which are the primary result of horses being congregated and handled in large numbers, especially in the open. Supposing it had failed to rise to the occasion! Supposing it had failed to win in the fight against the appalling disasters that could follow on widespread mange outbreaks, other contagious diseases, and those ills which are the result of constant work in mud with attendant exposure to the icy winds of winter! Artillery and transport would surely have had their mobility seriously jeopardized. But the Service of which I am writing has done great things, and now, after four years of war and after all that they have taught, it is consolidating its triumphs and facing each new trouble with strengthened assurance and confidence.

A victim of sarcoptic mange.

The same horse two months after the dip treatment, rapidly becoming healthy and well.

It will be interesting if at this point I set out the general functions of the Veterinary Service as outlined in Field Service Regulations. Thus the Service is organized with a view to preserving the efficiency of the animals of the Forces in the field:

1. By preventing the introduction and spread of contagious diseases.
2. By reducing wastage among animals by means of prompt application of first aid.
3. By relieving the field army of the care of sick and inefficient animals, the presence of which hampers mobility.
4. By the treatment in hospitals of animals removed from the field army.
5. By the replenishing of veterinary equipment.

The mange patient. Taking a plunge into the calcium-sulphide bath.

Quite unnecessary is it to mention here that the welfare of our men is the first and foremost concern of the Army, but that fact does not lessen in the slightest degree the desire to do everything humanly possible for the horse and mule in sickness. The functions mentioned above, therefore, are carried out with unceasing zeal, the main idea always uppermost being to keep the front free of all but fit animals. There must always be a certain amount of sickness there, but it is of the trivial kind which does not call for evacuation to the hospitals on the Lines of Communication. Such slight sickness represents about 2 per cent. of the whole, and is dealt with by the veterinary officers attached to units and at the mobile veterinary sections, to which reference will be made in due course. It is quite true that the chief enemy of our war animals is not the Boche with his shot and shell. He is only responsible in the sense that he is the cause of the animals being where they are. The real enemies are the hard weather, the hard conditions under

which they must necessarily work and exist, and those diseases which are incidental to the collection and movements of horses and mules in great numbers. And that brings me to the subject of those diseases which are responsible for providing the Service with the bulk of their patients in hospital.

It is well, in the narration of this important phase in the lives of our war animals in France, that I should first convey to the reader some notion of these diseases, their nature and their effects. A description of the hospitals and veterinary methods of combating and curing can suitably follow. At the outset, therefore, it is necessary to clear up the popular idea that a horse is a robust animal. He is nothing of the sort. He is most susceptible to lapses in health. Contagious diseases easily get a grip of him, his resistance being astonishingly feeble. He readily feels changes of scene, environment and feeding, and especially is this the case with heavy draught horses, their chief trouble in this connection being respiratory. Thus fever and catarrh find him an easy prey. I particularly noticed this during a fairly intimate connection with Base Remount Depôts. New arrivals off ships which were fit when they embarked would frequently develop respiratory troubles, and in France much of that class of sickness was confined to animals newly landed from England.

It is, indeed, most singular that coughs, fevers, catarrhs, pneumonia and pleurisy are so comparatively slight among horses at the front. The fact says a good deal for the better management about which I have written and the improved shelters of to-day compared with the early days of the war. But it also proves that direct exposure, when once animals have become acclimatized and hardened, is not the predisposing cause. Rather is it something specific and assisted in its spread by the assembly of animals in large numbers at bases, on ground, too, which has never had a chance of recovering from horse sickness. The exigencies of war do not allow of horses when on active service being maintained in anything but large assemblies, and so the veterinary expert must fight against a cause which he knows must predispose the horse to sickness.

At the present time the two most serious troubles with our animals in France are mange and other allied skin diseases, and ophthalmia. I saw many examples of both, though the former is essentially a winter disease. When you consider the conditions under which horses must live, admirable as they are considering the circumstances, and when you think of the easy way disease is carried and spread in spite of the most strenuous efforts to localize it, the small percentage of sick animals in France is really astonishing. Of that percentage about 12 per cent. are horses and 6 per cent. are mules. Their trouble may be one or other, and sometimes both or more, of catarrh, gunshot wounds, lameness, ophthalmia, ulcerative cellulitis and skin disease. At the moment skin disease may be in the largest proportion. At another time it may be some other trouble. The fact is, as I have said, that mange is a winter disease; and furthermore, disease invariably comes and goes as a wave. No sooner is one defeated than another gathers in force. To-day it may be "skin"; to-morrow it may be ophthalmia, and so on.

There are three forms of mange, of which the genus sarcoptic is the worst

in its devastating effects and it takes longest to kill. The parasite burrows under the skin and then lays its wretched eggs. If a horse thus attacked has on its long winter coat the trouble has made serious headway before discovery. For this reason it was decided to clip horses as far as possible before the advent of the cold weather, *i.e.*, in October and November, and to allow the coat subsequently to grow. By this means it was hoped to reduce the risk of mange considerably, at the same time to permit a reasonably long and protective coat to grow before the onset of the really cold weather.

How is the Veterinary Service tackling the mange trouble ? Not so long ago it was the practice to apply by hand oily dressings of sulphur to the affected parts, which were chiefly in the region of the mane, neck and withers, but it was tedious, slow, and altogether unsatisfactory. Dipping is now the method both as a prevention and as a cure. Dips were first employed in a campaign during the war in South Africa, the idea being borrowed from Australia, where baths suitable for large numbers of animals were originally introduced. Having first discovered the offending parasite, by the aid of a microscope magnifying fifty times, the positive case is relegated to the mange lines of a veterinary hospital. Animals with whom he has been in contact become suspects and must accordingly be kept under observation. And so the mange lines fill as the result of evacuations from the front, and operations at the Dip, which is now part of the equipment of every veterinary skin hospital become an urgent necessity.

The dipping bath is in the shape of a long and deep well, so deep at the entrance end that the animal is submerged when the sheer drop precipitates him into the steaming creamy fluid of calcium sulphide. He swims a few strides and then finds himself climbing and able to walk out at the other end. The odours are anything but pleasant, and the most enthusiastic veterinary officer will not say that his patient enjoys the ordeal, especially in the winter months, in spite of the fact that the bath is heated. But the great thing to remember is that the process has proved life-saving and has saved the big population of Army horses and mules in France from being ravaged by the scourge. Hundreds a day can be dipped, and the process has to be repeated several times before convalescence is entered on. Meanwhile, we see something of the unsightly effects on the poor animal. His skin, having suffered this sub-surface erosion, has shed its hair, there are great bald patches, and it is corrugated, hard and tough. For two months he is undergoing the cure.

In connection with mange treatment, I saw an installation for treating horses by means of sulphurous acid gas (SO_2), a process originated by French veterinary officers. Horses are put into chambers, only their heads protruding into fresh air, and their bodies are exposed to the gas for two hours at a time. I believe the idea as suggested by the French has not been perfected. The density of the gas is not sufficient, but there are possibilities which are still being developed. It will, I think, be of interest to add that mange more readily attacks horses than mules. The proportion is something like four to one. Clearly there is something about the mule's skin that the parasite does not find to his liking, which is still one more virtue to the credit of the mule.

CHAPTER XII

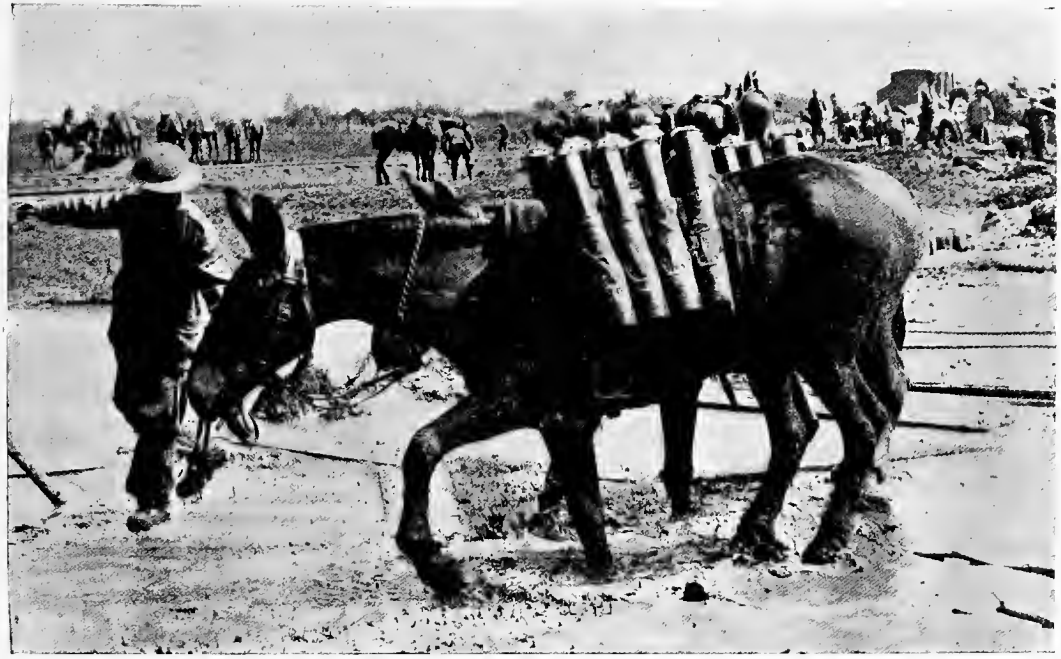
Horses and Mules in Sickness

IT is appropriate, in continuing the narrative of veterinary work and enterprise among the horses and mules in France, to pause and survey the situation as it was created after the German hordes had poured over the basins of the Somme and reoccupied territory on which it had been hoped they would never again set foot. Such a retreat, like that, for instance, of the Fifth Army in the spring of 1918, must have involved the sacrifice from wounds and exhaustion, perhaps also from capture, of a certain number of animals.

So much is obvious. We know also during those days of acute tension when the whole terrain was torn and aflame with devastating and devouring gunfire and vast rear areas were searched by long-range guns and bombs, that our gun and transport animals must have borne their share of the dreadful shock of unprecedented battle. What was so along that far-flung 50-mile battle line in the closing days of March must also have been enacted by day and by night in the North when the mighty titanic struggle swayed in and around Armentieres and carried Ballieul and Kemmel in its fierce bull-rush.

What of our horses and mules during those days of crisis and anxiety? They were a vital consideration beyond all question. That surely is understood, without the mere writing of the words. The saving of our men's lives in movements to the rear must in a large measure be dependent also on the saving of our horses' lives. They must live to preserve the mobility of the fighting forces. They must fill their big and vital part in withdrawing the guns from their forward positions; in securing the mobility of the Army Service Corps which must never lose touch; in bringing up ammunition to gunners and infantry; in saving those transportable stores and munitions of war which an oncoming enemy would advertise as "booty"; and in a hundred different ways.

It is just natural to lapse at a moment like this into comparing pictures deeply engraved for all time on the mind. Imagination has nothing to do with it, since only those who have seen and participated can understand. Words, however eloquent, cannot convey reality to those who have not. One recalls the short winter's day on the Somme with Albert left behind to the westward, or a point farther north around which the hell of battle has since raged. Our forward guns were lost in the poor visibility of the fast-ebbing



The pack mule getting on with his job.

A team of gallant American greys charging through mud with supplies for the front line.

day and the battery horses in their rough lines were not so far in the rear. There was little suggestive of blood and tumult then. Only an occasional thud of a shell-burst broke in on the daily routine of work and steady preparation. No one heeded it. The enemy was as inactive as he was invisible. A sinister calm !

Horses and mules were familiar with their surroundings. Their lot was being improved as time passed by. They stood on firmer ground and they got their rations with unfailing regularity. This was peace in war behind our old battle line of the winter of 1917–18. And then . . . !

. . . . . .

Open warfare, an Army in retreat, a war of movement in which horses and mules helped bravely to stem the torrent which threatened to rush through the gap in the barrier ! There were the Cavalry troop horses which essayed the rôle assigned to that arm of the Service and they did not come out unscathed. The gun horses moved the guns from position to position or brought them to the rear when our magnificent men fell slowly back, fighting always grimly, heroically, defiantly. The roads were black with streams of horse-drawn transport of all kinds, salving this, safeguarding that, and in countless ways preserving intact the mass of equipment and belongings of a still unbroken Army.

What days and nights those were ! Many a brave gun horse and many a tough old mule may never turn their heads to the West again ; for some would fall by the wayside, stopped by shell or dropped from exhaustion. Have you not read in the vivid stories of the war correspondents of shell-riddled villages with only a few dead horses remaining to indicate the red murder of the guns ? They, too, seem to tell their stirring tale of sacrifice without which our heavily-pressed Forces would not have escaped the attacking masses. That surely is true, and when, either now or years hence, you come to read of the defeat of great German Armies in their plans to crush and batter the British out of existence, you will perhaps spare a grateful thought for the horses and mules which in their thousands made our salvation possible.

They have suffered their share, as was inevitable. They suffered again in our triumphant Autumn advances of 1918. The wounded, like the wounded among our heroic fighting men, have been sent to fill the hospitals. The exhausted and the debilitated from over-work and exposure, have been sent " down the line " to rest. And from hour to hour, day to day, it is still going on—toil, sacrifice, and honour—and just as the men are found so also are the animals to reinforce the battery and wagon lines, the Cavalry units, and the thousand odds and ends of an Army that must still rely on man's best friend.

. . . . . .

Debility, the diagnosis of a horse's condition when his constitution fails him, when he loses condition, appetite, and all interest in life, when, in fact, his machinery has run so low that it is threatening to stop altogether, is the great hospital-filler. If there were no war there would not be this heavy percentage of debility cases among the sick horses and mules, for the trouble is wholly the product of war and the making of war. Very often it is the origin of other troubles that go to complicate and prolong treatment. It

Experiences in mud, which is a pernicious carrier of disease among horses. But the shells must get to the battery positions.

may make the animal more susceptible to those pernicious diseases of the skin ; it may affect respiratory and digestive organs ; and, though the immediate cause of the prevalence of ophthalmia in our horses and mules is not known, debility is not unlikely to be partially responsible in the sense that it must predispose to any other forms of sickness. Naturally, reduced vitality means less resistance to contagious maladies and the hardships of piercing winds and horrible clinging mud.

Only those who have seen the awful state of roads and a country which has been scarred and lacerated out of recognition by artillery fire can truly understand what is at times required of those animals that must be close on the heels of the troops holding the line. I have especially in mind the light draught horses and mules for the field guns and the animals used for pack purposes when the haulage of wagons in bringing up supplies and ammunition is quite out of the question. War as such is a stern and remorseless tyrant, and the toll it exacts is reflected in the temporarily " broken " animals that are humanely evacuated with the utmost speed. That toll has to be paid, and it is in the paying of it that the Remount Service comes in with its replacement of casualties. It is a Service which has never once failed to maintain our strength in horses and mules.

Obviously it is wise in bringing about the release of debilitated and exhausted animals at the front to see to it that they are not allowed to get too low in condition. Advanced cases must take a long time to bring back to the full vigour of health in the rest camps, and especially is this so where aged animals are concerned. We must not overlook the fact that the war has now been going on for over four years, and that animals which had to be mobilized in 1914 are nearing the time when they are necessarily failing from natural causes, apart altogether from the terrific strain of war conditions. And in this connection I may point out that about 10 per cent. of the horses now passing into veterinary hospitals are fifteen years old and over. It then becomes a question whether they can be retained with advantage to the Forces in the field, whether, in fact, it is good finance and sound policy to persevere with them in their reduced and worn condition. It is here that the Veterinary Service also comes in. Their primary objective is to cure and restore ; but hard facts have to be faced, and more often than not our gallant allies, thus permanently impaired, have to be given their discharge. They may be sold for the easier and quieter life on the land with French agriculturists, or, if they are past that, they are humanely slaughtered for food in the *abattoirs* of Paris and other cities and towns.

There are times, of course, when debility sickness is more marked than at others, as, for instance, in wet and cold weather, and after a " push," when animals must advance after fighting forces over what was once a " No Man's Land." Thus in the spring of 1917, when the weather was exceptionally severe and military operations were intense, the wastage from debility and exhaustion rose to a marked extent, but happily this did not last long.

Let me further catalogue the sickness. There is that ophthalmia to which I have alluded. It is a serious trouble and on that account is causing anxiety both inside and outside the Veterinary Service. The first symptoms are what

is known as conjunctivitis, a kind of inflammation of the membrane of the eye which causes watering of the affected eye or eyes. In time an opaque film seems to settle over the iris, causing partial blindness. Sometimes total blindness follows, and in that case the animal naturally loses much of his usefulness. He might, when blind, be used for easy work at the bases, but in the majority of cases he has to be cast as being unserviceable.

How to account for it and why it should show a tendency to develop are points not easy to determine. There was a form of ophthalmia among horses in the South African War, and the eye used to burst. The form in France is technically known as irido cyclitis, and the belief is fairly general

An operation in a Veterinary Hospital. The patient under chloroform.

among our leading veterinary officers that it may be induced by a state of low constitution, exposure, irregular exercise and errors in feeding. The affected animals show marked fear of the light of day. If it is difficult to trace the cause there is also doubt as to whether the treatment at present in vogue will effect a permanent cure. "Causa sublata tolliteur effectus" may be the admirable motto of those experts who would first remove the cause in order to banish the effects; but it is not absolutely certain that the cause of ophthalmia is known.

It is known, however, that animals fed in America on cotton seed develop a similar condition, and one seems to have an impression rather than a con-

viction that the imported draught horses and mules from America are more subject to it than others. What happens in the Ophthalmia Veterinary Hospitals in France now is that the symptoms are found to be much alleviated, even if they do not actually subside, by a hypodermic injection just above the eye. There is no guarantee that the trouble will not recur, but it is certain that the Service is making headway in the matter and that the trouble should be got more and more in hand as time goes on.

I come now to forms of sickness which are considered to be due almost solely to animals having to work and stand about in mud. "Grease," cracked heels, sloughing of the skin round the coronet and the pastern have been, and are, a curse, especially where the heavy Shire horses from England are concerned. Has the reader, who is not a veterinary scientist, ever heard before of ulcerative cellulitis? I have an idea it is only recently that it has come into prominence. It is an ugly trouble which is helping to destroy the usefulness of our war animals, and when on a horse's legs—generally his hind ones—some running ulcers break out, they are diagnosed as ulcerative cellulitis. The miscreant is a microbe which in time creeps higher until it effects an entry into the body and attacks the kidneys. The sick horse is doomed then and fit only for destruction.

The excellent laboratories for bacteriological research—there is usually one attached to every hospital—must have the credit for giving the Veterinary Service the practical mastery of this disease; that is, if the case is not too far advanced when it comes up for treatment. I happen to know that one hospital I visited dealt with 1,867 cases from January to October, 1917, and 595 cures were effected. Since then the percentage of cures has steadily risen, there and everywhere.

At another hospital, probably one of the best in France, the Commanding Officer related a rather unusual incident to show that cellulitis does not necessarily reveal its existence by ulcers in the leg. Among a new batch of sick horses from the front there was one suffering from what seemed to be a simple bullet wound in the loin. From the fact that there was a suppurating discharge he concluded that the bullet was still lodged inside. He probed, and as the instrument went in about ten inches, he decided to operate and search for the bullet. At the second whiff of chloroform in the operating theatre the horse fell dead—only the second horse lost under chloroform at this particular hospital since the beginning of the war, the other being a horse with a very diseased heart. Naturally a *post-mortem* examination was made, and a huge abscess was found in one of the kidneys. On examining the pus it was found to be precisely the same as that from the cellulitis ulcer. The incident, therefore, taught the officer two things: (1) That the trouble does not always show in the legs; and (2) that should he again see a punctured wound in the loin with suppuration, apparently a bullet wound, he would just test the discharge, and if he found it to correspond with cellulitis he would know that an operation would be unavailing. The only course would be destruction of the animal.

I think it will interest the reader if I say here what the proportion of disease is as between horses and mules. For instance, I have already men-

tioned that mange attacks four horses to one mule. In the case of debility there are 4·50 horse patients to one mule; lameness is about equal, and it is a curious thing that mules seldom recover from bone lameness. Eight horses to one mule is the proportion in respect of digestive diseases; cellulitis is as four to one, and ophthalmia is as two to one.

Gunshot casualties naturally fluctuate according to what is going on at the front. Veterinary surgeons do indeed owe much to the experience war has brought them. Especially is this so of those who, day after day, have been engaged in the operating theatres searching for and extracting the cruel jagged shell splinters, shrapnel bullets and bomb splinters, and in many different ways bringing relief to the poor suffering creatures. Theirs has, indeed, been humane and splendid work, for by their skill and knowledge they have saved the lives of thousands that would have been doomed in days gone by, when surgery was nothing like as advanced as it is to-day. Then, too, their operations have been assisted by the aseptic methods of sterilization of wounds and instruments in place of the antiseptic methods once favoured. One officer I know is very proud of twenty-three pieces of shrapnel of all sizes which he extracted from one horse. That same horse was in due time restored to active service. When I think of the great work being done by the Veterinary Service, of the immense strides it has made forward in research, surgery, and the study of disease, my wonder is that the authorities have not established schools on the spot for the training of those who must one day fill the ranks. The opportunity is unique. Certainly every veterinary surgeon in the United Kingdom who is fit for service abroad should, for his own sake as well as his country's, have a period of service in France.

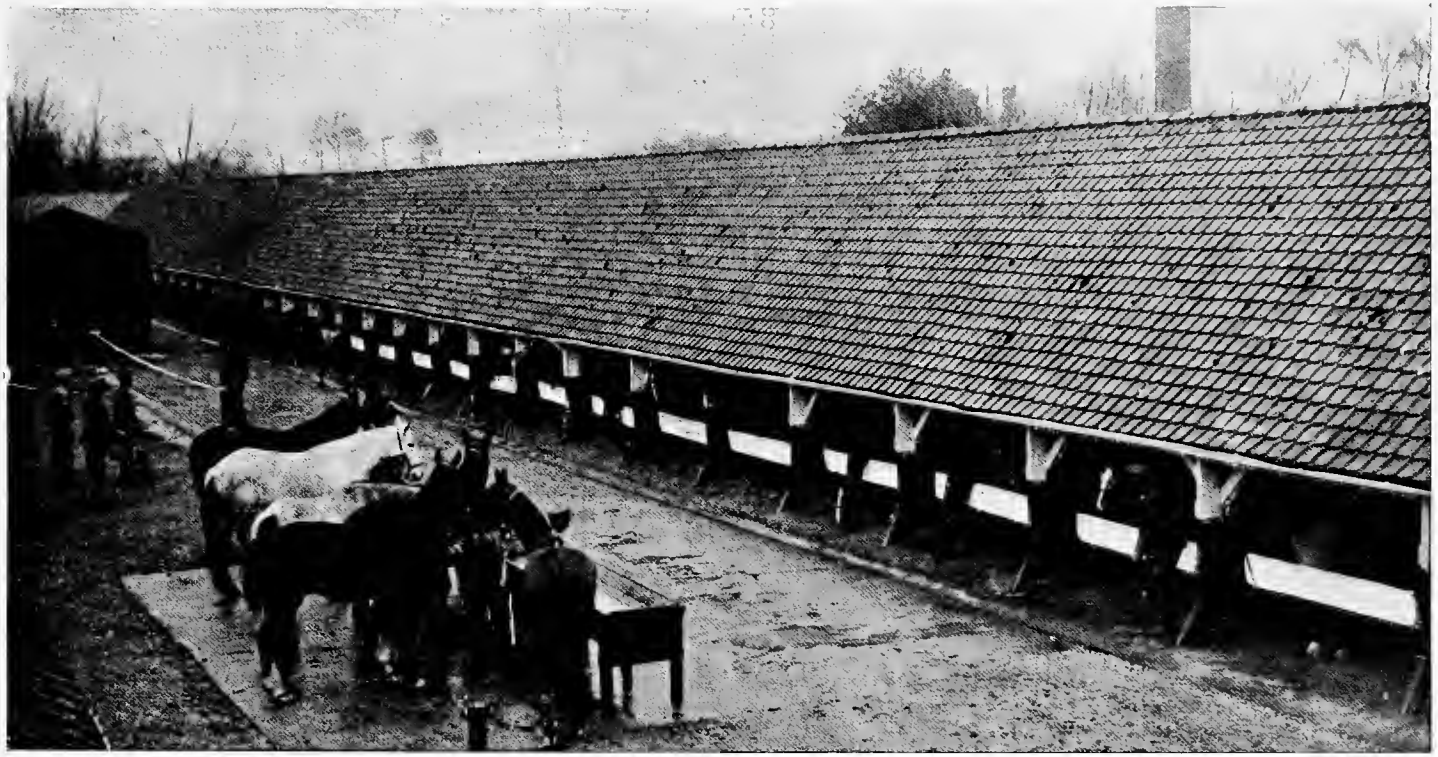
CHAPTER XIII

Treatment in the Veterinary Hospitals

WE at once get on terms of peculiar intimacy with the Veterinary Service and its splendid work in curing the sick and healing the wounded among our hundreds of thousands of dumb helpers when we come to visit their hospitals and learn something at first hand of the highly organized methods of filling and emptying them. Contemplate for a moment these figures and the unmistakable meaning they convey: 551,960 horses and mules admitted to the veterinary hospitals and convalescent horse depôts in France from the beginning of the war to the middle of February, 1918, of which 394,768, or 71·5 per cent., were passed out as cured, leaving 34,327 still under treatment. In the same period 16,215 died, and 106,650 were destroyed, cast and sold, including those cast and sold to horse butchers. There was a time when 84 per cent. were cured and sent back into the fighting line. The percentage dropped to 80, then to 78 per cent., for it must be remembered that horses, as I have already explained, are getting older, while another factor in increasing the number of castings is the desire to retain in service only absolutely sound and workably sound horses. I am assured that, for the sake of economy in the long run, every possible care is taken to rid the Service of those worn and broken animals which are not likely to be of any more use to the Army in any sort of capacity.

The reader is invited to follow the career of the sick or wounded animal which the veterinary officer on the spot has decided shall be sent from the front to the base. It should be understood that with every formation in the field there is an Administrative Veterinary Officer, and Executive Veterinary Officers are with the different units of the formation. On falling sick or wounded—"ineffective," as they would say in military language—an animal is sent to a Mobile Veterinary Section, which is a very small veterinary unit, one of which is attached to each cavalry brigade and each infantry division. These sections were introduced as the result of experience gained in South Africa, and, having seen them at work, I can vouch for their efficiency and the important part they are playing in beginning the movement of the sick from the front. It is their function to give first aid, and simple cases they retain and issue into work again. Their real work, however, is to dispatch, as often and as quickly as possible, the hospital cases to one of the large reception depôts.

There may be several such depôts, and two which I saw yielded lasting



A long range of warm stabling in an old brick yard.

impressions of what can be done by an administration which seems to have mastered every detail in regard to the welfare of the horses and the care of those men who constitute the rank and file of the Veterinary Service. The first of them is in a town of fairly considerable size, and it certainly owes much to the fact that it is chiefly housed in what before the war was a French artillery barracks. Thus there is comfort at once for the sick and wounded that come down from the front by road, rail or barge, and especially is this so in the old riding school, which is now the temporary home of many " cases." The idea of the sick arriving in barges is certainly unique. Five, each to hold thirty-five, are employed on the canal in this way, and the journey makes for peace and rest *en route*. The other reception hospital I have in mind is probably the last word on such institutions. In all manner of ways—in the utilization of clever yet simple devices, in the observance of absolute cleanliness, in the maintenance of clean and hygienic " standings " for the horses, in the provision of shelters and wind-screens, in the careful study of feeding and general horse management —the hospital is just as perfect as brains, enterprise and abundant energy can make it. Moreover, it is laid out on sandy soil, which is a boon of inestimable worth.

These reception depôts have radiating from them other hospitals which take the animals distributed to them. Each reception depôt may be said to be the mainspring of a group of hospitals. They are, of course, of very special importance, since every animal arriving is at once put into a class according to the nature of its sickness. Skin cases are sent along to a hospital which specializes in the care of mange and kindred troubles ; surgical cases are sent to where surgery is made a speciality of ; and ophthalmia may be sent elsewhere. The success of the system is beyond all question. It means that a hospital commandant and his staff become expert in what they are made to specialize in, though there may be a certain monotony in the institution whose reputation depends on the healing of mange. The treatment, for instance, does not assist that smart and clean appearance which is always aimed at, since mangey horses and mules are of themselves an eyesore and are certainly no advertisement for efficient grooming.

I have in mind two specially fine " skin " hospitals—one close to the reception depôt I have been describing and partly accommodated in an old cement factory, the other many miles away on the outskirts of a famous city. It was at the latter hospital that I was much struck with the close attention given to feeding. Every individual horse, most of them wasted in condition as well as going through the mange cure, seemed to be considered. Then the making of hay racks and partitions between stalls, all made with the old wire from baled hay, were items of clever contrivance. It was at this hospital that the patients were dipped in an arsenical bath in preference to calcium sulphide. It is said to be more efficacious, and is certainly less obnoxious. This hospital has passed through 40,000 animals, of which 24,000 had been sent to the neighbouring base remount depôt and 8,000 to convalescent horse depôts. Every general horse hospital takes special pride in its operating theatres, in perfect cleanliness, and in the refreshing and quiet stimulus of patches of grass lawn here and there. Everywhere an endeavour is made to secure rest and thorough

The uses of camouflage at a tented Veterinary Hospital in France.

change for the patients. Everywhere, also, equipment is up to date and scrupulously clean.

As auxiliary help the Veterinary Service appreciates nothing more than the work done for the State by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. It is a fact, I believe, that this Society has made grants up to date totalling £100,000 to the cause of sick and wounded animals in war by the provision of hospital accommodation, horse ambulances and laboratory appliances.

I have no impression of one hospital being better than another. Where all are so good I should indeed be sorry to single out one for special praise, but I must not omit to mention one close to the coast because of the clever and resourceful way in which an old brick-works, its sheds and its fields, covering an area of about forty acres, have been adapted as a hospital. There I saw a surgeon perform an operation for quittor, which is a form of sorosis of that portion of the foot at the crown of the hoof. It is a very serious and frequent trouble, especially with heavy horses, and the old-time operation usually left an unsightly scar and growth with certain chronic lameness. The operation, introduced by French veterinaries many years ago, involves the cutting away of the cartilage affected, and this can be done by making only a very slight incision, with a consequent small scar when the wound has healed. The operation is proving invaluable and causing a great saving in horses. This same hospital between December, 1914, and December, 1917, had admitted 41,658 animals and had discharged as cured 32,455.

It is impossible to do more than touch very briefly on those other most essential departments of the Veterinary Service in France. There are the convalescent horse depôts, created in close proximity to the hospitals which issue to them those horses that need the exercise that freedom in kraals gives them, good feeding and professional care prior to being passed on to remount depôts. These convalescent depôts are wisely laid out on sand or sandy soils, so that the strain of moving about in heavy mud is not imposed on the convalescents. Then the Director has under his charge about 3,000 acres of fine grassland in Normandy, and here tired and worn horses come to feed on the green food of the spring and summer months and recover that strength and confidence which are so essential to their future usefulness. Animals so turned out receive a portion of their normal daily ration of oats and hay, but it will be understood that, compared with the keep and maintenance of them in hospitals, the cost is comparatively low and means a very considerable economy.

I come now to touch on the important question of the disposal of those animals considered unfit for further active service. The Veterinary Service is the chief casting authority ; only on the score of age and unsuitability for any specific job in the Army can Remount Authorities exercise the veto of casting. And when it is remembered that a trifle over 20 per cent. of the horses admitted to hospitals never return to active service, it will be understood that castings are on a big scale. Do not for a moment imagine that this 20 per cent. represents dead loss. From (*a*) sales to farmers for work on the land ; (*b*) sales to horse butchers for food ; and (*c*) reduction of carcases of any animals not suitable as food for by-products of skin, fat, bones, flesh, hoofs, etc., the average

sum of £50,000 a month is brought into the British Government's exchequer. The figure, indeed, is rising, as horses, alive or dead, are fetching bigger prices. Horseflesh is a fairly common article of food in France, and from some of the hospitals I have seen truckloads of cast animals leaving for Paris, where they are dealt with at the *abattoir hippophagique*. Under agreements the animals are bound to be destroyed under the supervision of the Veterinary Service within forty-eight hours of admission, and humane cattle killers are specially provided by the R.S.P.C.A. for their destruction.

Those animals which have died or which are too poor or unsuitable for the purpose of food are disposed of at special *abattoirs* in close proximity to veterinary hospitals. Their skins are salted on the premises and dispatched to England for sale ; the carcases are rendered down for fat, and on an average two gallons are obtained from each animal, realizing as much as 14 fr. a gallon. I recall that at one hospital I saw gas being drawn off from a tremendous manure dump, and the gas was being utilized in the rendering down of the carcases. Now an economizer apparatus is being erected at selected centres, and so the Veterinary Service is using its splendid organization to get the utmost possible out of our war animals whether in life or in death.

It has been my portion to be associated with our war-horses and mules in their hundreds of thousands. I hope that my sketches of their lives, from the time they are trained in the United Kingdom, through their active service life in France, and then in their days of sickness, will have interested readers. They have necessarily been brief, maybe even superficial, but there was no alternative. Either the subject had to be dealt with as one would mirror first-hand impressions, or else by minute and detailed chronicle of unlimited length. The latter was ruled out, first of all by the fact that we are still in the midst of the raging tumult, and therefore the story, once begun in detail, could have no end in detail ; and, secondly, because it was against military interests to write too definitely of our horse organization both on active service and in sickness. Thus there have been omissions, discreet enough now, but which I shall hope to fill in when happier times come. While, therefore, much remains to be said of very great interest, a good deal has been written in these articles which, I hope, will have conveyed a better understanding of how gallantly and worthily our horses and mules have assisted our cause and of the infinite care that is taken of their welfare.

Both services—the Remount and the Veterinary—have every reason to be proud of their records. Both have learned by experience as, indeed, they could not help doing. But there were those in authority unashamed of profiting by mistakes and capable always of acting on first knowledge and new ideas acquired. I may not have attempted to deal with the vast question of preventive medicine in veterinary science, but then only a fool would have ventured as a layman to enter into scientific detail which, under the circumstances, would assuredly have been out of place, and would probably have bored the reader. The success of preventive medicine in the Army Veterinary Service will make an admirable after-the-war theme for an official professional pen. Meanwhile I can only once again put into simple language my admiration for what has been done by the Veterinary Service in France. The fact will give much satisfaction

among tens of thousands of horse-lovers in the United Kingdom, and also in the United States, whence so many of our war animals came ; and I am equally certain it will not discourage any who are associated with our horse services in always aiding the hard and, oftentimes, perilous lot of the horse on active service.

CANADIANS

By W. H. OGILVIE

WITH arrows on their quarters and with numbers on their hoofs,
With the trampling sound of twenty that re-echoes in the roofs,
Low of crest and dull of coat, wan and wild of eye,
Through our English village the Canadians go by.

Shying at a passing cart, swerving from a car,
Tossing up an anxious head, to flaunt a snowy star,
Racking at a Yankee gait, reaching at the rein,
Twenty raw Canadians are tasting life again !

Hollow-necked and hollow-flanked, lean of rib and hip,
Strained and sick and weary with the wallow of the ship,
Glad to smell the turf again, hear the robin's call,
Tread again the country road they lost at Montreal!

Fate may bring them dule and woe ; better steeds than they
Sleep beside the English guns a hundred leagues away ;
But till war hath need of them lightly lie their reins,
Softly fall the feet of them along the English lanes.

CHAPTER XIV

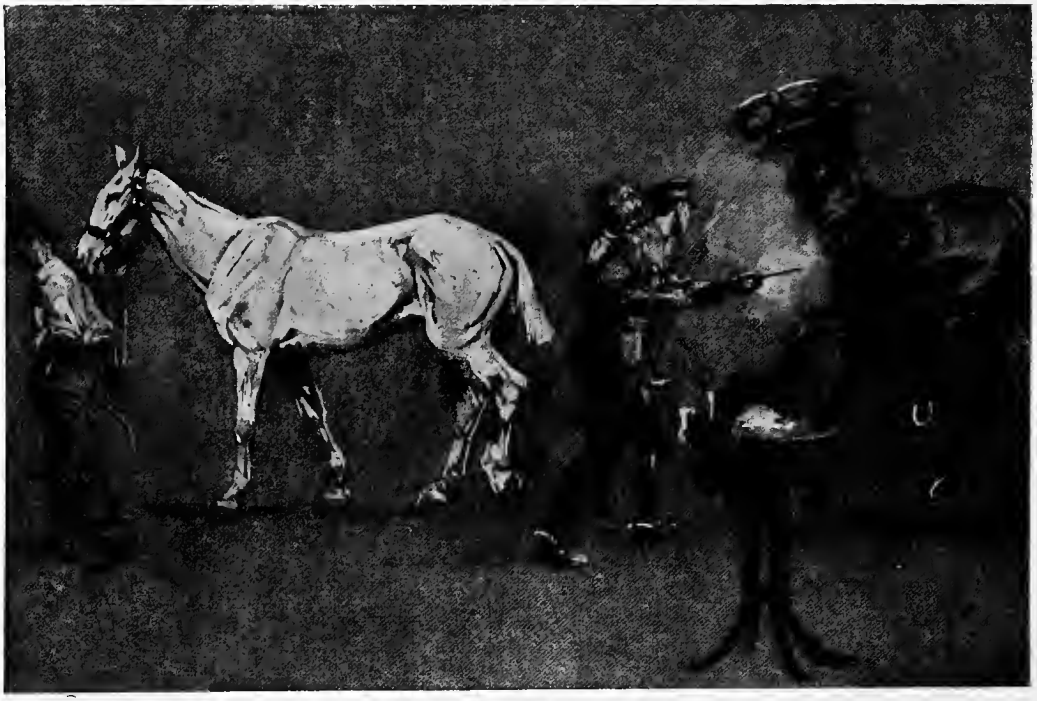
"Cast and Sold"

I HAVE thought it well to include in this book some reference to the methods of disposing of "casters"—those animals which are cast by the Army authorities as being no longer serviceable for military purposes. For that reason it is a pleasure to avail myself of illustrations which are, indeed, extremely clever in their conception and faithful to the smallest detail. They show Captain Lionel Edwards at his best, not only as a distinguished artist but as a particularly observant Remount officer. He, like every Remount officer, must have intimate knowledge of this phase of remounting, or, shall I say, dismounting, since the Army is taking a considered farewell of old servants that for physical reasons can no longer serve. They are being given their discharge. Every drawing tells its own eloquent tale of pathos or it may be of humour. I have never known a sale of Army "casters" at which both pathos and humour were missing.

These sketches deal with a sale in England. Such a sale is tolerably well known in the vicinity of a Remount Depôt or a Veterinary Hospital, and it represents, of course, the last phase in the career of the war-horse. In a great theatre of war like France casting is carried out on a big scale because several hundreds of thousands of horses and mules are in our possession, and the proportion of worn-out, too-old-at-fifteen or twenty years of age, incurably lame or sick, and hopelessly wounded must be very considerable. The very large majority of them are not sold at public auction as in England. They are beyond rendering any more service either to the State or the civilian individual and mercifully destroyed either for human food or for the by-products resulting from the rendering down of their carcases. I have touched on that in a previous chapter with special reference to the large sum of £50,000 or more which every month is paid to the State in respect of the disposal of cast British Army horses in France. It represents wastage to our horse resources, but a small gain as a set-off to the dead loss.

In England the horse has not actually been to war. He has been training for the ordeal or he has been employed here for a long time doing his job faithfully and well until there comes a time when joints and sinews, perhaps at all times predisposed to lameness, collapse under the strain. The war, you must remember, is over four years old at the time of writing this, and a horse can be fresh and well at ten years of age but hopelessly worn out at

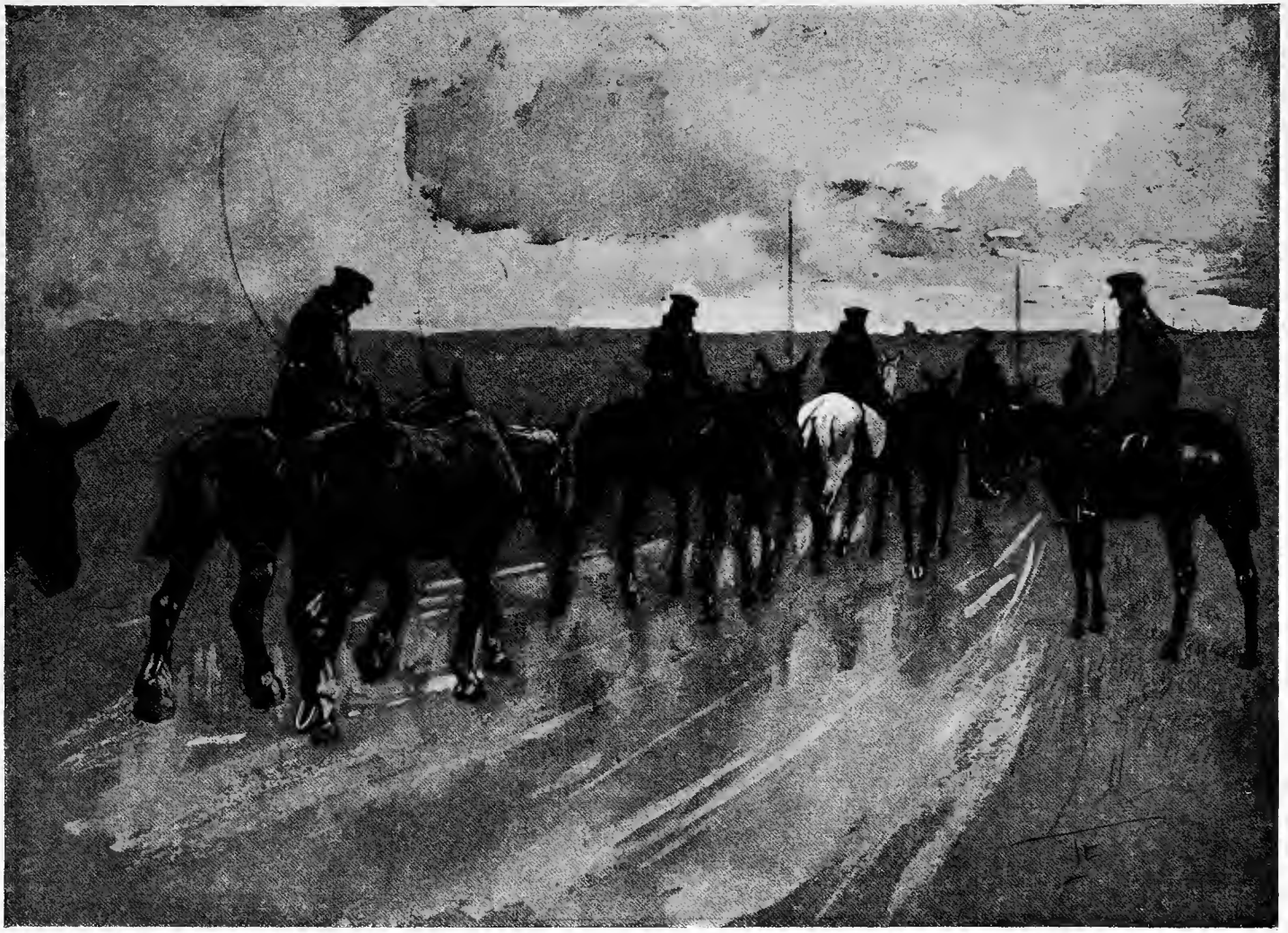
fourteen years of age after an interval of wear and tear. It need scarcely be said that there must be very solid reasons for the casting of horses, and if those reasons were good two or three years ago they become doubly so as time goes on and the question of replacement does not become easier. The Army Veterinary Service is the chief casting authority, for the simple and all-sufficient reason that its officers are the professional experts of disease and unsoundness. If they say a horse will always be lame or can never be healthy and strong again, then it is the obvious thing to give the animal its discharge so that it may no longer remain an expense to the public in the sense that it would never



Branding cast horses with a "C" on the near shoulder.

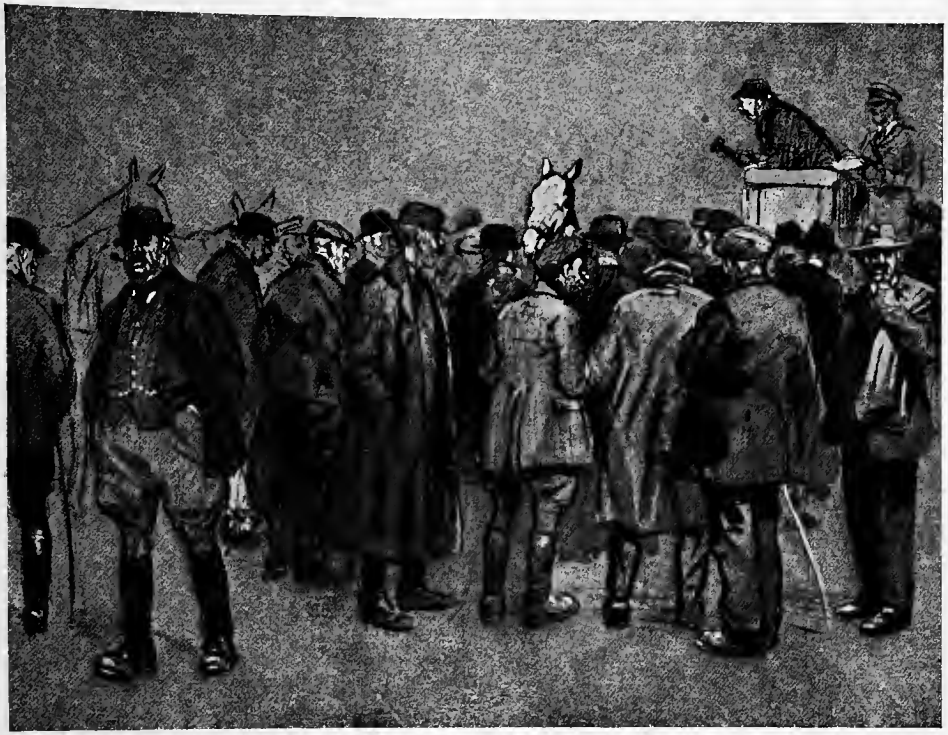
again be able to do any work to justify its keep and general maintenance. It follows that "casters" therefore must come from the veterinary hospitals in greater numbers than from the Remount Depôts.

A Remount casting authority may exercise his powers in the case of an animal which he does not consider is fitted to do any sort of job in the Army, either in draught, saddle, or pack. It is singular how you may come across the occasional "misfit" even where the work is so varied as in the Army. The Remount officer may also cast on the ground of vice, though there is a reluctant disinclination to act. No officer likes to consider himself beaten by a vicious



On the road to the place of sale,

and dangerous horse, and the result of a longer period of patience, or methods which have to be "vigorous to be kind," have often resulted in the sentence of casting being removed. Still an occasional incorrigible wrong 'un among so many thousands is bound to occur. One does not mind the kicker so much. The horse that strikes with his forelegs or rushes at you open-mouthed and bellowing like a bull is not a pleasant individual for the bravest man to tackle. The striker with his forelegs gives you so little warning and may do so much damage. A development which has done much to reduce castings in this country as well as to advance the prices realized at sales of "casters" is the



"Who'll give me another half-guinea ?"

tremendous stimulus given to national food production. Many a draught horse with ringbone, navicular, or even laminitis, has had his career of usefulness extended through being transferred from the Army to the Food Production Department. He was useless in a team with a General Service wagon on the roads; his poor old feet and legs would not stand the "jar." But he could work in comparative comfort in the plough or on the stubbles, and moreover he helped to produce corn at a time when horse power on the land was very badly wanted.

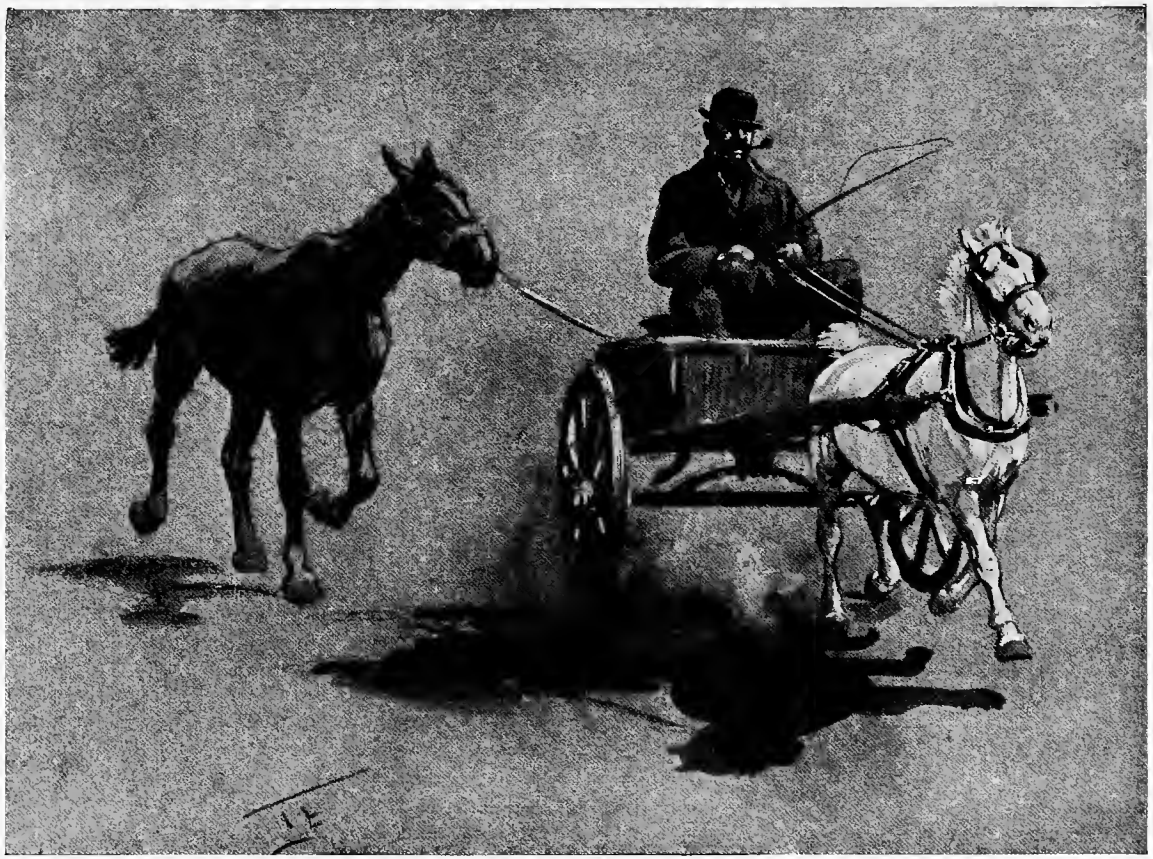
Perhaps the lot of the cast riding-horse is most pathetic. Who wants

Good enough looking and well enough bred, but—"no legs, no horse."

him ? He can no longer carry a man because his poor old forelegs have " gone," and there is not enough of him to make a draught horse. And yet any old job in the shafts must mark his rapid descent in the equine social scale. Few want to buy the cast mule. The average Englishman does not understand the mule ; neither does he seem to wish for any better appreciation of the gallant old slave. Certainly it is a mystery to one who has seen him do so splendidly in this war and can gladly concede the undoubted virtues he possesses. Their small feet are not adapted to work on heavy land, but that may be more apparent than real. The real test is how the mule acquits himself, and there seem to be no conditions to which he cannot adapt himself. Still, as I have said, no one wants to pay much for the cast mule. It may be because there is practically no chance of curing a mule suffering from pronounced bone lameness, or that one cast for vice is regarded as being altogether past praying for as a possible convert to better and less heathen-like ways.

Much of the mule's so-called vice is merely its way of demonstrating fear and suspicion rather than an aggressive desire to open an ugly offensive without the slightest provocation. The miscellaneous collection of British tradesmen, who may have dealt in rare books or had practised as undertakers or greengrocers, and who seemed to be posted to Remount Depôts more by design than accident, were not ideally suited to winning the confidence of the apprehensive and suspicious mule. I am reminded in this connection of a good story told in the course of a lecture on the management of horses in the war by Major C. D. Miller, a most efficient and successful Remount officer, to the Cavalry School in France. He was referring to the class of men remaining for service in the Remount Depôts after the transfer from time to time of all men placed in category " A," and he went on to say: " When censoring letters one day I came across one written by one of my men to his girl at home. In civil life he had been a traveller—in piece goods or ladies' lingerie, or something equally ' horsey.' He told her that he was enchanted with everything in Remounts except the horses and mules. The horse he considered a very dangerous animal at both ends and damnably uncomfortable in the middle. The mule, he found, generally took great pains to make friends with you so as to make quite sure of being able to kick you on exactly the right spot when the opportunity should arise. When I saw the writer of the letter riding I knew he had told his girl the truth, and when I saw him in the stable I longed to be a mule ! "

To return to the disposal of cast Army horses, the reader will understand that a local auctioneer is requested to hold a sale, which is duly advertised so that prospective buyers may attend on the day. As a preliminary to their leave-taking of the Army each " caster " is branded on the near shoulder with a " C " indicating that he has absolutely and finally been given his re-entry into civil life. Then the rather doleful procession of a score or so, a man riding one and leading another, sets off in charge of an officer, who is carrying with him to the place of sale his authority and all other documents. For, of course, you never do anything in the Army without the assistance of many documents ! It follows that the party is one to arrest the attention of the passer-by, who may not realize that the animals are the outcasts of the



The start for the "Caster's" new home.

Army. For one thing the pace is funereal, which is suggested by the slow march and the drooping heads. You may not hurry the lame, the halt, and the blind, to which may be added the broken-winded; and so the pace of this little procession with its suggestion of real pathos is that of its slowest unit. The most unsophisticated onlooker notices that they are not the strong and healthy, bright-eyed animals that usually leave the Depôt for the train *en route* for overseas. He notices the knife-board back, the staring ribs and the sunken eyes of the chronic debility case; the shuffling amble of the incurably lame; and the swollen "greasy" legs of the heavy draught horse. The presence of one or two others he may not so well understand, for stone-blindness is not at once apparent to the passer-by, the broken-winded riding-horse has no outward signs at the moment to indicate his troubles, and the one condemned for vice is apparently at the high-water mark of robust health. Naturally the man in khaki has not elected to ride the confirmed kicker, bucker, and biter.

"'Ere comes a circus," shrieks a delighted small boy, whose mother hastily gathers him up from the middle of the road and explains that it is the Army going out on manœuvres. One also seems to have overheard the muttered criticism of the elderly lady who frowns on this seemingly shocking evidence of Army neglect and cruelty towards their "poor dear horses." And the girl who now drives the baker's cart cannot resist an inquiry of the Corporal with the party as to why he had brought out his horses without their wheels. At the place where they are sold their preliminary inspection is carried out by prospective buyers with as much care as a connoisseur of art and antiques will display in quite another kind of mart. Such inspectors too! Soft-hatted, bowler-hatted specialists in cheap horseflesh, who know exactly where the dividing line is that separates the "fair" and the "bargain" prices. Their hope is that the Remount people may have made a "blob" in casting one or more that were "not 'arf bad" and might profitably be patched up by more skilful hands than are to be found in the Army! So the "casters" must endure an ordeal of intimate inspection—all except the vice cases, which the velvet-waistcoated experts discover for themselves without the telling. For it should be understood that these cast Army horses are sold without any sort of guarantee. Of what virtue could they guarantee them? I confess I am unable to name one. Their total innocence in this respect is of course the *raison d'être* of their visit to the auctioneer's.

If you want to see the real expert at work watch one of these prospective buyers. He may be a horse-dealer with forty crowded years of experience behind him in the humble line of business, a dealer in "antiques," "has beens," and "crocks." He may be a rural butcher with a taste and capacity for occasional horse "coping"; or he may be the inevitable bargain-hunter who is at every sale and horse fair. They were certainly not born yesterday, as it were, and they get up very early in the morning and remain fairly wideawake when any business is doing. He knows where to look for the cause of casting. If he cannot find tendon troubles about the heavily-fired legs, serious bony enlargements, or spavins, he knows how to test the patient for his eyesight, and if he is still mystified he watches his opportunity to use his stick to see if the animal grunts to the flourish of it and so reveals his wind infirmity. Some-

To celebrate the bargain or to effect a quick re-sale.

times he even attempts to seek light from the severely non-committal Remount officer in charge like an importunate and insinuating backer essays to worm himself into the confidence of a trainer or jockey on the racecourse. For, of course, it is important that the speculator in Army "casters" should not allow himself to get too badly "stuck." He knows there are risks, and his ways of trying to reduce them never failed to raise my admiration of his resource and his knowledge of cheap horseflesh.

They cluster at the foot of the auctioneer's rostrum after the approved manner of buyers at Tattersalls in London and laugh derisively when the salesman expatiates in a professional manner on the virtues and limitless possibilities of the ex-cavalry horse. You see he is doing his best for the Government and taking every care that he shall earn his commission. Moreover, most auctioneers I have seen at work have entered into the spirit of the sale and have good-humouredly adapted their chaff to the cosmopolitan character of their horse-coping audience. "Now, gentlemen," he observes, "we'll give him one more run and please keep your sticks down. He's not used to them." "No, guv'nor, you're right there; what 'e's been used to 'as bin goin' about in a Bath-chair, I expect!" observes an old stager with a nomad's face and style of dress. The crowd opens out to let him be run up, and the result of the manœuvre is that some one hardens his heart and starts the bidding at a couple of guineas. The auctioneer looks pained at the insult, and the bidder has a slight shock of anxiety until competition begins and the "caster" has found a new owner. So on through the programme, and then there is the squaring up on the spot with the auctioneer and a general adjournment of the buyers to adjust private transactions.

Prices, of course, have varied a good deal. Early in the war "casters" as a rule would only make the price the knacker could afford to pay. There was no demand for them at that time, but times have changed. The horse slaughterer can afford to pay a better price, for there is a market for the meat and a demand for the hide, etc. Then there is a general horse shortage of general utility animals in the fifth year of war, especially of draught horses for the land. It is the reason why animals which have no military value have made some remarkable sums at auction, showing that the user had to avail himself of any sort of assistance, however temporary it might prove to be. All my experience goes to show that judicious casting of Army horses is most essential in the interests of financial economy and general efficiency. The authorities, be they veterinary or remount, may not like to show heavy casting returns in case the former should be criticized for condemning where they ought to cure, and the latter for their general horse management. The reluctance to do so, however, may surely be overdone since it means that animals are kept at the public expense, which, because of their proneness to disease and sickness, have little or no chance of doing active work with units and, therefore, must spend their days passing between Remount Depôts and Veterinary Hospitals and congesting both. Certainly it is not true economy to go beyond certain limits with chronic cases of lameness and those which come under the category of "aged and worn out." If a horse is not considered good enough to send overseas then he is relegated to home service, and when the time comes that he is

useless for the latter he should surely be retired for good financial reasons from Government ownership. Thus he would become a "caster," and the Government would be relieved of the further responsibility of his maintenance. The inclusion of this chapter in "The Horse and the War" needs no better justification than the need for explaining a procedure by which the worn out and the diseased are discarded and relieved from further service of "national importance."

CHAPTER XV

Percheron Horses in England

THERE arrived at a large Remount Depôt in the South of England about two years after the start of the war a number of Percheron stallions and mares from France; the object of those intimately interested in the coming of these animals being to found a distinct breed of this type of draught horse in the United Kingdom. The Government are not the direct purchasers of these horses, but through the Remount Service they have given every encouragement and facility to certain private breeders to exploit their patriotism in this way. This serious introduction of the Percheron breed to England is a matter of much significance to breeders and users of draught horses, and must not be ignored. There may be prejudice and possibly active opposition to the introduction, but there is also support and a welcome to the horses, emanating as it does from a small but influential and growing body of Englishmen who have come to the deliberate conclusion that for military purposes hereafter, and for general purposes at all times, the type is a desirable one for us to develop.

Why have they come? The question is one which opens the way to a simple statement of facts. That statement, if it is to be frank and convincing, must bear on the experiences and lessons derived from the horsing of the guns and transport during over three years of war. I have endeavoured to show why the light draught horse from Canada and the United States is the real horse of the war. It was shown how our great Armies and those of our Allies had been primarily equipped in regard to horses by the marvellous crowds of animals that had been brought across the Atlantic. And the virtues of the type—great endurance, fine physique, soundness, activity, willingness to work, and almost unfailing good temper—were expatiated on with some enthusiasm. Their introduction to the United Kingdom was foreshadowed as being an inevitable outcome of experiences during these three years of great trial and stress for horses.

Fortunately for the Allies, the Percheron-bred horse was available in great numbers; and, to be sure, great numbers were wanted, and may be still. The horse supply of the United Kingdom, by comparison, represented but an infinitesimal quantity of the whole. None was better than the riding-horse, because for the most part the pre-eminent British thoroughbred was conspicuous in the strain. But the draught horse is the real horse of the war, and in this

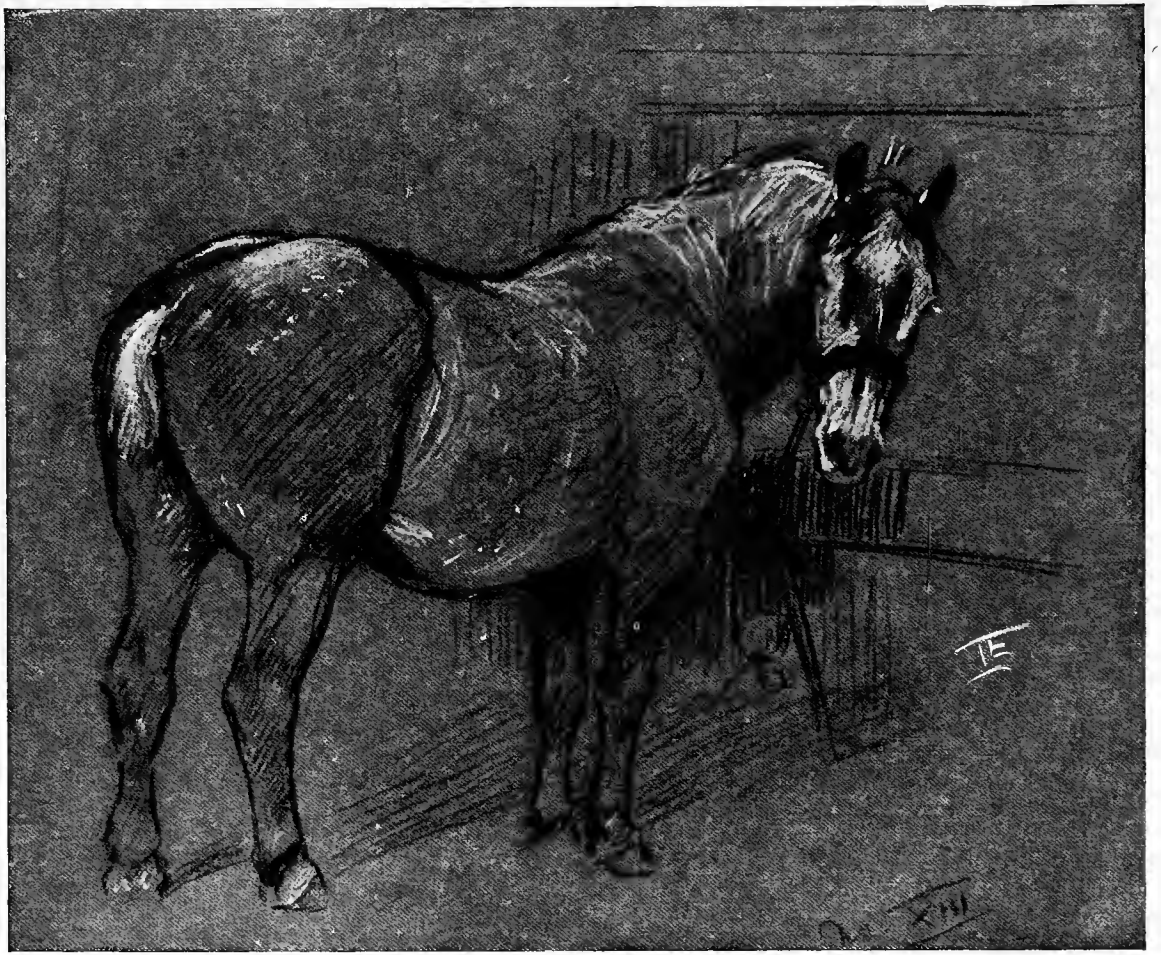
An American Percheron sire. A noble example of the foundation stock of the Allies' most successful war-horse.

vital respect the resources of our country were hopelessly inadequate and, it must be added, disappointing in regard to results. The heavy draught horse has been chiefly of the Shire-bred type, the impressive cart-horse of fine size, weight and feathered legs fostered by the Shire Horse Society. One must be perfectly honest and say they have failed to stand the strain, exposure and hardship imposed by modern warfare. The fact is beyond all argument. It is the unanimous opinion of all who have been concerned with them, and it is the fact above all others which has primarily influenced that semi-official movement which we now see initiated on serious lines in favour of introducing the Percheron breed to this country. It is why these stallions and mares have just been landed here, and why in the years to come the event will be regarded as epoch-marking in the history of horse breeding in this country.

As to how the development of the breed will proceed in the near future is a question which does not arise here. No doubt a scheme has been drawn up. What has been found lacking and is urgently required is a type of draught horse which will best meet the exacting demands of modern warfare, and, having from experience found that the Percheron is the best, he is naturally the one selected for propagation in this country. After all, it is not surprising that the Shire horse has not come up to expectations. In the Norman days, which probably mark his origin in England, he was, indeed, the war-horse of the period, since he was used by the knights when heavy armour was worn. And so heavy were the knight and his armour that together they were reckoned to weigh 32 stone. The Shire horse of to-day must, one supposes, be even an enlarged edition of the Norman age, and as such he has not made an ideal transition from the plough and heavy wagon to the horse lines in the open and the big guns in the mud of Flanders and the Somme valley. His constitution has cracked and he has been predisposed in an alarming degree to "grease" and kindred leg ailments, as well as serious respiratory troubles. He has therefore convinced the authorities that the war-horse of the future, if he be forthcoming in this country, must be found in another direction.

Again, we may take it that the pioneers of the Percheron movement in England are hopeful that users of draught horses, chiefly farmers, will take kindly to the new-comer. Will they? It is a question which remains to be answered. Optimists, who point to the breed's overwhelming vogue in agriculture in France, Canada and the United States, have no doubt on the point. Others prophesy failure on the grounds that the farmer will not forsake the Shire and Clydesdale to which he and his fathers and forefathers have uninterruptedly been accustomed. We may take it there is no intention that the new-comer should supplant the famous English cart-horse, whose vogue has extended over the centuries. His position is too secure in our day to be assailed by the advent of a hundred or more true-bred Percherons. He will continue to pull and haul on the land and he will flourish on his abundant rations and the warm stable, which are so essential to his good health. The Percheron, if he should come into favour with the agriculturist, will assuredly do so on his merits.

Here let me interpose some extremely interesting notes conveyed to me in a letter from Mr. Wayne Dinsmore. He has had long experience of all the different draught breeds on the range in western South Dakota, and for seven

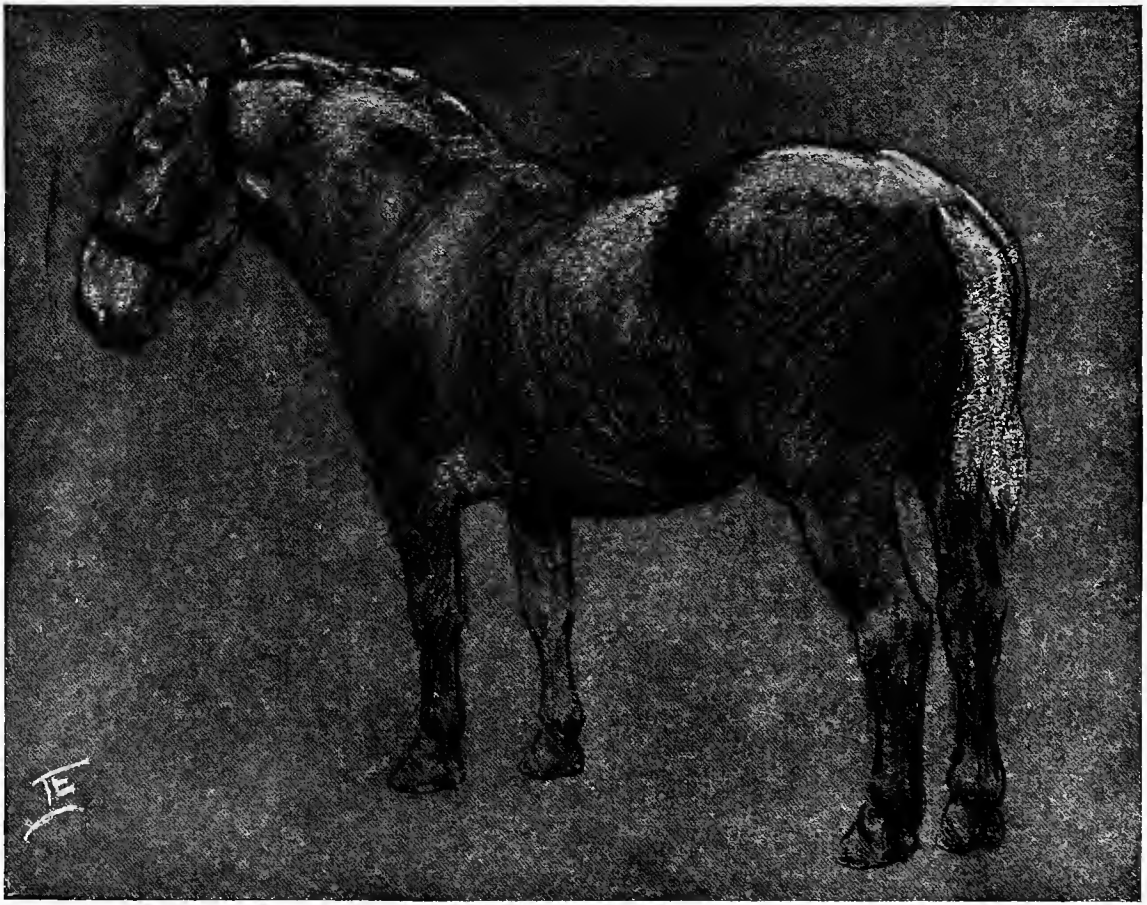


A grey French Percheron mare, now in England. Sketched from life.

years was on the Staff of the Iowa Agricultural College at Ames, where as associate professor he taught classes in the history and development of all draught breeds. This is what he says :—

"It may interest you to know that the production of so large a number of admirable artillery horses in the United States has been due to the breeding up of small mares by the use of Percheron sires and to the conditions under which a large proportion of these animals are reared. Small Western mares, weighing from 800 to 1,000 pounds, have been bred to Percheron stallions. The get, if liberally fed and reared under farm conditions, would mature at 1,400 or 1,500 pounds, but in virtually all cases the colts have been foaled on the open range and have grown to maturity without any feed other than that obtained from the dam and native pastures. The result is that such colts have actually matured at 1,100 to 1,207 pounds. The half-blood females of this kind have been again bred to Percheron stallions, and their produce, reared under the same general conditions, have matured at from 1,250 to 1,500 pounds, depending on the amount of nourishment available where they were reared. A very large proportion of the horses which have gone for artillery purposes are such three-quarter blood Percherons, reared without any feed other than that which they obtain on pasture, and the outdoor life which such horses have developed under has made them exceedingly hardy and able to endure unfavourable climatic conditions. The endurance of Percherons is proverbial, and it has been accentuated by reason of the conditions under which these horses have been reared. Even on the farms in the great Middle West a very large proportion of the horses are reared in this manner ; for it is unfortunately true that very few of our farmers feed foals, yearlings and two-year-olds liberally enough on grain and hay, in addition to pasture, to make possible the full development in size and strength. Some cross-breeding has, of course, been done, and in addition to this the progress upward from the small foundation has oftentimes been retarded by reason of the fact that many of our Western ranchmen have not used pure-bred Percheron sires, but have been prevailed upon, on account of financial reasons, to purchase and use grade Percheron stallions carrying three-fourths or seven-eighths Percheron blood. There are many such grade stallions produced in Illinois and Iowa, where breeding has been long continued, and a very large number of such grade horses have been sold for use on Western mares. These have made marked improvement, but of course the gain has not been as great as where pure-bred sires have been used, and for this reason it not infrequently occurs that at least four crosses of Percheron blood are to be found in animals purchased for artillery or transport purposes.

"One thing which has retarded American horsemen in producing good horses is the fact that the demand for Percheron stallions has been so great that a good many which should properly have been castrated have actually been used for service. Colts occur in all breeds that are not up to standard, and it has too frequently happened that animals deficient in feet or legs, particularly with regard to position of hind legs, have been sold for breeding purposes for the reason that the farmer could get twice as much for them when rising two, if he sold them as stallions, as he could obtain for them if he were to castrate said colts and keep them until maturity. Under the circumstances



A second example of the grey Percheron from France.

you cannot blame farmers for permitting the colts to be sold. This is one explanation for the fact that quite a good many horses are not as perfect in their underpinning as Percheron men would like to have them, but this is gradually being eliminated, as we are now producing more Percheron sires of the right stamp and our buyers are steadily becoming more discriminating in their selections.

"The one thing that has added more to the popularity of Percheron horses than any other factor is the fact that the Percheron sire is extraordinarily prepotent, stamping his characteristics upon females of any size or breeding. Ranchmen of long experience who have reared thousands upon thousands of horses report the get of Percheron stallions always possess the characteristics of the sire, regardless of what the dam may be, and that the colt, whether from a large or small mare, is a compact, thick, powerfully-muscled, serviceable horse, saleable whether he be large or small.

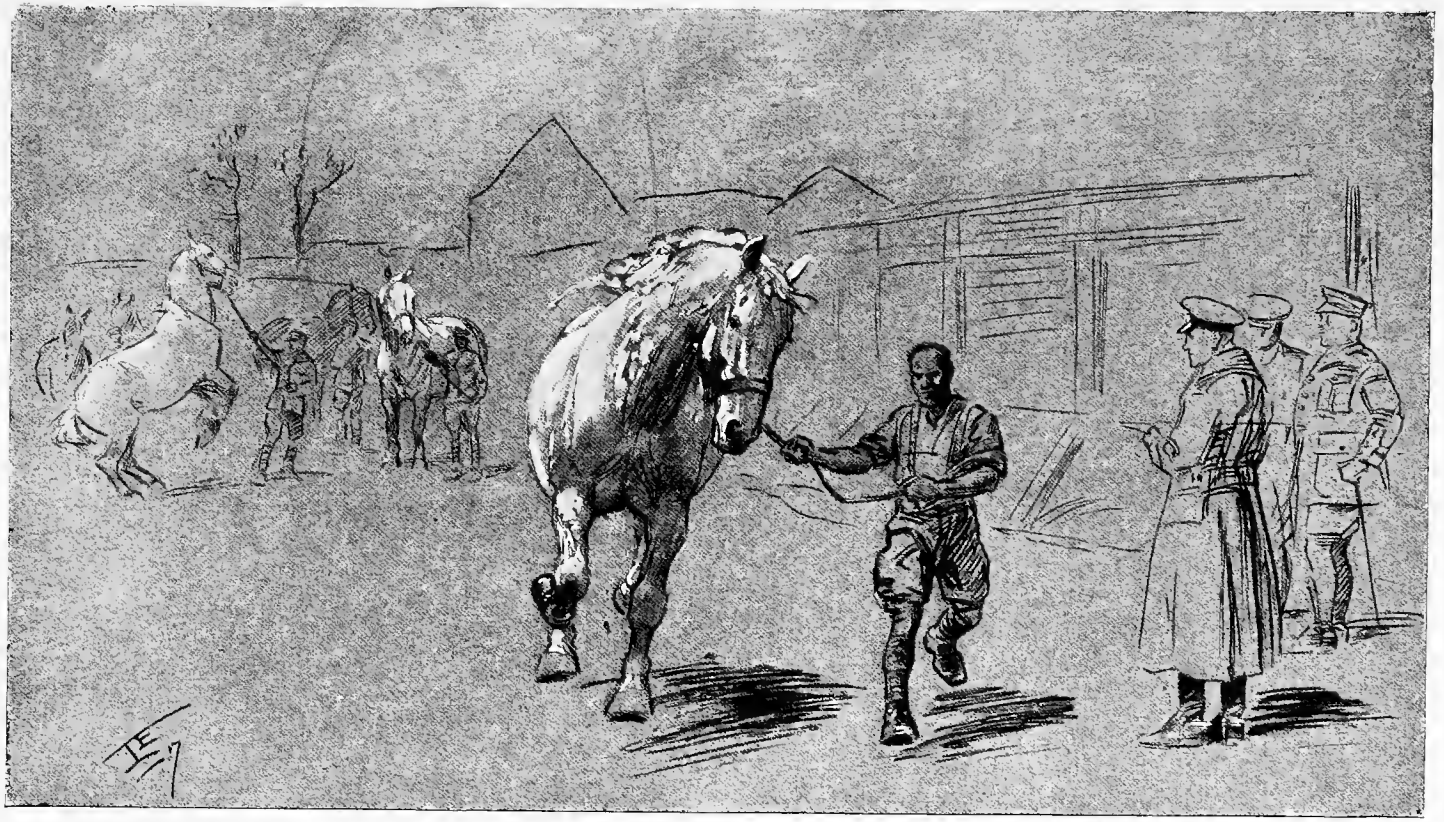
"I do not wish your English readers to gain the impression that Percherons are useful only for siring artillery horses, for as a matter of fact they are primarily a draught breed. A sire should stand at least 17 hands, have depth of chest equal to one-half of his height, and be well proportioned throughout, weighing in breeding condition around a ton. The best females usually stand around 16·2 to 16·3 hands, are likewise deep-bodied and roomy in the middle, and weigh from 1,750 to 2,000 pounds, although we have some mares that are larger. Those I speak of, however, are considered the most typical.

"In contrast to the desirable results obtained from crossing Percheron sires on mares of any type or breeding, other heavy breeds have not crossed kindly on so wide a variety of females. If crossed on very small mares the get lacks proportion, are heavy-headed, awkward in underpinning, and in all instances lack the deep, roomy middle, easy-keeping qualities and extreme hardiness characteristic of the Percheron grades.

"I have written thus fully because I believe these items will interest you, and I am sure that you will find ample confirmation of my statements from the horses actually in service in France. Typical Percheron horses are as good in the underpinning as horses of any breed, bar none.

"The Percheron horse will not only produce the best artillery horses the world has ever seen, but grades carrying three-quarters or seven-eighths Percheron blood will, if properly grown out, make draught horses of real draught character and size that will outwear others in hard city service. This is one of the particularly noteworthy characteristics of the breed, as has been demonstrated in American cities. They have gone into stables, have worked side by side with other geldings, have kept in condition on less feed, and have outlasted them by years."

After all, it is something quite substantial in his favour that none better is needed in France and North America. And it is also deeply significant that individuals associated with the Army Remount Service, men who have been with horses and studied them all their lives, should have been converted to the Percheron-bred draught horse. These officers were admittedly prejudiced against them at the outset. It has been a kind of creed with every Englishman that the horses of no other country are as good as those of his own. It is a



An inspection of newly-landed Percheron mares in England.

belief handed down from generation to generation, and it will be understood, therefore, that the notion was far too deeply rooted to be shaken by anything but the most convincing proof. If these prominent English judges of horses were not convinced, they were at least made to doubt their old beliefs. Everything that has happened in connection with the remount side of the war has gone to prove the urgency of instituting at once an Army horse supply in this country which shall be based on those lessons. Therefore it cannot be too clearly understood that the movement which has brought about the introduction of the Percheron to this country is dictated by no desire to harm existing breeds and the interests connected with them, but to found the right war-horse for the time to come. We may hope that after this hell on earth there will be no wars, but wise administrators must be prepared for anything, and least of all for a sudden reformation of the world and its peoples. If the Percheron should also fulfil agricultural requirements and ordinary draught purposes in commerce, so much the better. His coming will more than ever have been justified.

THE REMOUNT TRAIN

By W. H. OGILVIE

EVERY head across the bar,
Every blaze and snip and star,
Every nervous, twitching ear,
Every soft eye filled with fear,
Seeks a friend, and seems to say:
"Whither now, and where away?"
Seeks a friend and seems to ask:
"Where the goal, and what the task?"

Wave the green flag! Let them go!—
Only horses? Yes, I know;
But my heart goes down the line
With them, and their grief is mine!—
There goes honour, there goes faith,
Down the way of dule and death,
Hidden in the cloud that clings
To the battle-wrath of kings!

There goes timid child-like trust
To the burden and the dust!
High-born courage, princely grace
To the peril it must face!
There go stoutness, strength and speed
To be spent where none shall heed,
And great hearts to face their fate
In the clash of human hate!

Wave the flag, and let them go!—
Hats off to that wistful row
Of lean heads of brown and bay,
Black and chestnut, roan and grey!
Here's good luck in lands afar—
Snow-white streak, and blaze, and star!
May you find in those far lands
Kindly hearts and horsemen's hands!